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THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO.

VOL. II.



THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

*The Count of Monte
Cristo*

*Or, The Adventures of
Edmond Dantès*

*In Four Volumes
Volume II*



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THE COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ITALY — SINBAD THE SAILOR.

TOWARDS the commencement of the year 1838, two young men belonging to the first society of Paris, the Viscount Albert de Morcerf and the Baron Franz d'Epinay, were at Florence. They had agreed to see the Carnival at Rome that year, and that Franz, who for the last three or four years had inhabited Italy, should act as *cicerone* to Albert.

As it is no inconsiderable affair to spend the Carnival at Rome, especially when you have no great desire to sleep on the Place du Peuple or the Campo Vaccino, they wrote to Maître Pastrini, the proprietor of the Hôtel de Londres, Place d'Espagne, to reserve comfortable apartments for them. Maître Pastrini replied that he had only two rooms and a cabinet *al secondo piano*, which he offered at the low charge of a louis per diem. They accepted his offer; but wishing to make the best use of the time that was left, Albert started for Naples. As for Franz, he remained at Florence. After having passed several days here, when he had walked in the Eden called the Cascines, when he had passed two or three evenings at the houses of the nobles of Florence, he took a fancy into his head, after having already visited Corsica, the cradle of Bonaparte, to visit Elba, the halting-place of Napoleon.

One evening he loosened a bark from the iron ring that

secured it to the port of Leghorn, laid himself down, wrapped in his cloak, at the bottom, and said to the crew:

"To the Isle of Elba."

The bark shot out of the harbor like a bird, and the next morning Franz disembarked at Porto-Ferrajo. He traversed the island, after having followed the traces which the footsteps of the giant have left, and re-embarked for Marciana. Two hours after, he again landed at Pianosa, where he was assured red partridges abounded. The sport was bad; Franz only succeeded in killing a few partridges, and, like every unsuccessful sportsman, he returned to the boat very much out of temper.

"Ah, if your excellency chose," said the captain, "you might have capital sport."

"Where?"

"Do you see that island?" continued the captain, pointing to a conical pile that "rose out of the azure main."

"Well; what is this island?"

"The Island of Monte-Cristo."

"But I have no permission to shoot over this island."

"Your excellency does not require a permission, for the island is uninhabited."

"Ah, indeed," said the young man. "A desert island in the midst of the Mediterranean must be a curiosity."

"It is very natural; this isle is a mass of rock and does not contain an acre of land capable of cultivation."

"To whom does this island belong?"

"To Tuscany."

"What game shall I find there?"

"Thousands of wild goats."

"Who live upon the stones, I suppose," said Franz, with an incredulous smile.

"No; but by browsing the shrubs and trees that grow out of the crevices of the rocks."

"Where can I sleep?"

"On shore in the grottoes, or on board in your cloak; besides, if your excellency pleases, we can leave as soon as the chase is finished — we can sail as well by night as by day, and if the wind drops we can use our oars."

As Franz had sufficient time, and besides had no longer his apartments at Rome to seek after, he accepted the proposition. Upon his answer in the affirmative, the sailors exchanged a few words together in a low tone.

"Well?" asked he, "what, is there any difficulty to be surmounted?"

"No," replied the captain, "but we must warn your excellency that the island is contumacious."

"What do you mean?"

"That Monte-Cristo, although uninhabited, yet serves occasionally as a refuge for the smugglers and pirates who come from Corsica, Sardinia, and Africa, and that if anything betrays that we have been there, we shall have to perform quarantine for six days on our return to Leghorn."

"The devil! that is quite another thing — rather a long time, too."

"But who will say your excellency has been to Monte-Cristo?"

"Oh, I shall not," cried Franz.

"Nor I, nor I," chorused the sailors.

"Then steer for Monte-Cristo."

The captain gave his orders, the helm was put up, and the bark was soon sailing in the direction of the island.

Franz waited until all was finished, and when the sail was filled, and the four sailors had taken their place — three forward and one at the helm — he resumed the conversation.

"Gaetano," said he to the captain, "you tell me Monte-Cristo serves as a refuge for pirates, who are, it seems to me, a very different kind of game from the goats."

"Yes, your excellency, and it is true."

"I knew there were smugglers, but thought that since

the capture of Algiers, and the destruction of the regency, pirates only existed in the romances of Cooper and Captain Marryat."

"Your excellency is mistaken; there are pirates, like the bandits who were believed to have been exterminated by Pope Leo XII., and who yet every day rob travellers at the gates of Rome. Has not your excellency heard that the French *chargé d'affaires* was robbed six months ago within five hundred paces of Velletri?"

"Oh, yes, I heard that."

"Well, then, if, like us, your excellency lived at Leghorn, you would hear, from time to time, that a little merchant vessel, or an English yacht that was expected at Bastia, at Porto-Ferrajo, or at Civita Vecchia, has not arrived; no one knows what has become of it, but doubtless it has struck on a rock and foundered. Now this rock it has met has been a long and narrow boat manned by six or eight men, who have surprised and plundered it some dark and stormy night, near some desert and gloomy isle, as bandits plunder a carriage at the corner of a wood."

"But," asked Franz, who lay wrapped in his cloak at the bottom of the bark, "why do not those who have been plundered complain to the French, Sardinian, or Tuscan governments?"

"Why?" said Gaetano, with a smile.

"Yes, why?"

"Because, in the first place, they transfer from the vessel to their own boat whatever they think worth taking, then they bind the crew hand and foot, they attach to every one's neck a four-and-twenty pound ball, a large hole is pierced in the vessel's bottom, and then they leave her. At the end of ten minutes the vessel begins to roll, labor, and then sink; then one of the sides plunges, and then the other; it rises and sinks again; suddenly a noise like the report of a cannon is heard—it is the air blowing up the deck; soon the water rushes out of the scupper-holes

like a whale spouting, the vessel gives a last groan, spins around and around, and disappears, forming a vast whirlpool in the ocean, and then all is over; so that in five minutes nothing but the eye of God can see the vessel where she lies at the bottom of the sea. Do you understand now," said the captain, "why no complaints are made to the government, and why the vessel does not arrive at the port?"

It is probable that if Gaetano had related this previous to proposing the expedition, Franz would have hesitated ere he accepted it, but now that they had started, he thought it would be cowardly to draw back; he was one of those men who do not rashly court danger, but if danger present itself, combat it with the most unalterable *sang froid*; he was one of those calm and resolute men who look upon a danger as an adversary in a duel, who, calculating his movements, study his attacks; who retreat sufficiently to take breath, but not to appear cowardly; who, understanding all their advantages, kill at a single blow.

"Bah!" said he, "I have travelled through Sicily and Calabria, I have sailed two months in the Archipelago, and yet I never saw even the shadow of a bandit or a pirate."

"I did not tell your excellency this to deter you from your project," replied Gaetano, "but you questioned me, and I have answered — that's all."

"Yes, and your conversation is most interesting; and as I wish to enjoy it as long as possible, steer for Monte-Cristo."

The wind blew strongly, the bark sailed six or seven knots an hour, and they were rapidly reaching the end of their voyage. As they approached, the isle became larger, and they could already distinguish the rocks heaped one on another, like bullets in an arsenal, in whose crevices they could see the green bushes and trees that were growing. As for the sailors, although they appeared perfectly tranquil, yet it was evident that they were on

the alert, and that they carefully watched the glassy surface over which they were sailing, and on which a few fishing-boats, with their white sails, were alone visible. They were within fifteen miles of Monte-Cristo when the sun began to set behind Corsica, whose mountains appeared against the sky, and showing their rugged peaks in bold relief; this mass of stones, like the giant Adamastor, rose threateningly before the bark, from which it shaded the sun that gilded its lower parts; by degrees the shadow rose from the sea, and seemed to drive before it the last rays of the expiring day; at last the reflection rested on the summit of the mountain, where it paused an instant, like the fiery crest of a volcano, then the shadow gradually covered the summit as it had covered the base, and the isle now only appeared to be a gray mountain that grew continually darker; half an hour after and the night was quite dark.

Fortunately the mariners were used to these latitudes, and knew every rock in the Tuscan Archipelago; for in the midst of this obscurity Franz was not without uneasiness. Corsica had long since disappeared, and Monte-Cristo itself was invisible; but the sailors seemed, like the lynx, to see in the dark, and the pilot, who steered, did not evince the slightest hesitation.

An hour had passed since the sun had set, when Franz fancied he saw, at a quarter of a mile to the left, a dark mass, but it was impossible to make out what it was, and fearing to excite the mirth of the sailors, by mistaking a floating cloud for land, he remained silent; suddenly a great light appeared on the strand; land might resemble a cloud, but the fire was not a meteor.

"What is this light?" asked he.

"Silence!" said the captain. "It is a fire."

"But you told me the isle was uninhabited?"

"I said there were no fixed habitations on it, but I said also that it served sometimes as a harbor for smugglers."

"And for pirates?"

"And for pirates," returned Gaetano, repeating Franz's words. "It is for that reason I have given orders to pass the isle, for, as you see, the fire is behind us."

"But this fire?" continued Franz. "It seems to me rather to assure than alarm us: men who did not wish to be seen, would not light a fire."

"Oh, that goes for nothing," said Gaetano. "If you can guess the position of the isle in the darkness, you will see that the fire cannot be seen from the side, or from Pianosa, but only from the sea."

"You think, then, that this fire announces unwelcome neighbors?"

"That is what we must ascertain," returned Gaetano, fixing his eyes on this terrestrial star.

"How can you ascertain?"

"You shall see."

Gaetano consulted with his companions, and after five minutes' discussion, a manœuvre was executed which caused the vessel to tack about, they returned the way they had come, and in a few minutes the fire disappeared, hidden by a rise in the land.

The pilot again changed the course of the little bark, which rapidly approached the isle, and was soon within fifty paces of it. Gaetano lowered the sail, and the bark remained stationary. All this was done in silence, and since their course had been changed not a word was spoken.

Gaetano, who had proposed the expedition, had taken all the responsibility upon himself; the four sailors fixed their eyes on him, whilst they prepared their oars and held themselves in readiness to row away, which, thanks to the darkness, would not be difficult. As for Franz, he examined his arms with the utmost coolness. He had two double-barrelled guns and a rifle; he loaded them, looked at the locks, and waited quietly.

During this time the captain had thrown off his vest and shirt, and secured his trousers around his waist; his

feet were naked, so he had no shoes and stockings to take off; after these preparations he placed his finger on his lips, and lowering himself noiselessly into the sea, swam towards the shore with such precaution that it was impossible to hear the slightest sound; he could only be traced by the phosphorescent line in his wake. This track soon disappeared; it was evident that he had touched the shore. Every one on board remained motionless during half an hour, when the same luminous track was again observed, and in two strokes he had regained the bark.

"Well!" exclaimed Franz and the sailors all together.

"They are Spanish smugglers," said he; "they have with them two Corsican bandits."

"And what are these Corsican bandits doing here with Spanish smugglers?"

"Alas!" returned the captain, with an accent of the most profound pity, "we ought always to help one another. Very often the bandits are hard pressed by gendarmes or carbineers; well, they see a bark, and good fellows like us on board, they come and demand hospitality of us; you can't refuse help to a poor hunted devil; we receive them, and for greater security we stand out to sea. This costs us nothing, and saves the life, or at least the liberty, of a fellow-creature, who on the first occasion returns the service by pointing out some safe spot where we can land our goods without interruption."

"Ah!" said Franz, "then you are a smuggler occasionally, Gaetano."

"Your excellency, we must live somehow," returned the other, smiling in a way impossible to describe.

"Then you know the men who are now on Monte-Cristo?"

"Oh, yes; we sailors are like freemasons, and recognize each other by signs."

"And do you think we have nothing to fear if we land?"

"Nothing at all; smugglers are not thieves."

"But these two Corsican bandits?" said Franz, calculating the chances of peril.

"It is not their faults that they are bandits, but that of the authorities."

"How so?"

"Because they are pursued for having made a *peau*, as if it was not in a Corsican's nature to revenge himself."

"What do you mean by having made a *peau*? — having assassinated a man?" said Franz, continuing his investigation.

"I mean that they have killed an enemy, which is a very different thing," returned the captain.

"Well," said the young man, "let us demand hospitality of these smugglers and bandits. Do you think they will grant it?"

"Without doubt."

"How many are they?"

"Four, and the two bandits make six."

"Just our number, so that if they prove troublesome we shall be able to check them; so, for the last time, we steer to Monte-Cristo."

"Yes, but your excellency will permit us to take all due precautions."

"By all means; be as wise as Nestor, and as prudent as Ulysses — I do more than permit, I exhort you."

"Silence, then!" said Gaetano.

Every one obeyed.

For a man who, like Franz, viewed his position in its true light, it was a grave one. He was alone in the darkness with sailors whom he did not know, and who had no reason to be devoted to him; who knew that he had in his belt several thousand francs, and who had often examined his arms, which were very beautiful, if not with envy, at least with curiosity. On the other hand, he was about to land, without any other escort than these men, on an island whose name was religious, but which did not seem to Franz

likely to afford him much hospitality, thanks to the smugglers and bandits. The history of the scuttled vessels, which had appeared improbable during the day, seemed very probable at night; placed as he was between two imaginary dangers, he did not quit the crew with his eyes, or his gun with his hand.

However, the sailors had again hoisted the sail, and the vessel was once more cleaving the waves. Through the darkness, Franz, whose eyes were now more accustomed to it, distinguished the granite giant by which the bark was sailing, and then turning an angle of the rock, he saw the fire, more brilliant than ever, around which six persons were seated.

The blaze illumined the sea for a hundred paces around. Gaetano skirted the light, carefully keeping the bark out of its rays, then, when they were opposite the fire, he entered into the centre of the circle, singing a fishing song, of which his companions sung the chorus.

At the first words of the song, the men seated around the fire rose and approached the landing-place, their eyes fixed on the bark, of which they evidently sought to judge the force and divine the intention. They soon appeared satisfied, and returned (with the exception of one who remained at the shore) to their fire, at which a whole goat was roasting.

When the bark was within twenty paces of the shore, the man on the beach made with his carbine the movement of a sentinel who sees a patrol, and cried, "Who goes there?" in Sardinian. Franz coolly cocked both barrels. Gaetano then exchanged a few words with this man, which the traveller did not understand, but which evidently concerned him.

"Will your excellency give your name, or remain incognito?" asked the captain.

"My name must rest unknown — merely say I am a Frenchman travelling for pleasure."

As soon as Gaetano had transmitted this answer, the

sentinel gave an order to one of the men seated around the fire, who rose and disappeared among the rocks. Not a word was spoken, every one seemed occupied: Franz with his disembarkment, the sailors with their sails, the smugglers with their goat; but in the midst of all this carelessness it was evident that they mutually observed each other.

The man who had disappeared returned suddenly on the opposite side to that by which he had left; he made a sign with his head to the sentinel, who, turning to the bark, uttered these words: "*S'accomodi.*" The Italian *s'accomodi* is untranslatable; it means at once, "Come, enter, you are welcome, make yourself at home, you are master." It is like that Turkish phrase of Molière's that so astonished *le bourgeois gentilhomme* by the number of things it contained.

The sailors did not wait for a second invitation; four strokes of the oar brought them to the land. Gaetano sprang to the shore, exchanged a few words with the sentinel, then his comrades descended, and lastly came Franz's turn. One of his guns was swung over his shoulder, Gaetano had the other, and a sailor held his rifle. His dress, half artist, half dandy, did not excite any suspicion, and consequently no disquietude. The bark was moored to the shore, and they advanced a few paces to find a comfortable bivouac; but doubtless the spot they chose did not suit the smuggler who filled the post of sentinel, for he cried out:

"Not that way, if you please."

Gaetano faltered an excuse, and advanced to the opposite side, whilst two sailors kindled torches at the fire to light them on their way. They advanced about thirty paces, and then stopped at a small esplanade, surrounded with rocks, in which seats had been cut not unlike sentry-boxes. Around in the crevices of the rocks grew a few dwarf oaks and thick bushes of myrtles. Franz lowered a torch, and saw, by the light of a mass of cinders, that he

was not the first to discover this retreat, which was, doubtless, one of the halting-places of the wandering visitors of Monte-Cristo. As for his anticipation of events, once on *terra firma*, once that he had seen the indifferent, if not friendly appearance of his hosts, his preoccupation had disappeared, or rather, at sight of the goat, had turned to appetite.

He mentioned this to Gaetano, who replied that nothing could be more easy than to prepare a supper, when they had in their boat bread, wine, half-a-dozen partridges, and a good fire to roast them by.

"Besides," added he, "if the smell of their roast meat tempts you, I will go and offer them two of our birds for a slice."

"You seem born for negotiation," returned Franz; "go and try."

During this time the sailors had collected dried sticks and branches, with which they made a fire.

Franz waited impatiently, smelling the odor of the goat, when the captain returned with a mysterious air.

"Well," said Franz, "anything new? Do they refuse?"

"On the contrary," returned Gaetano; "the chief, who was told you were a young Frenchman, invites you to sup with him."

"Well," observed Franz, "this chief is very polite, and I see no objection; the more so, as I bring my share of the supper."

"Oh, it is not that; he has plenty, and to spare, for supper, but he attaches a singular condition to your presentation at his house."

"His house! Has he built one here, then?"

"No; but he has a very comfortable one, all the same, so they say."

"You know this chief, then?"

"I have heard talk of him."

"Ill, or well?"

"Both."

"The devil! And what is this condition?"

"That you are blindfolded, and do not take off the bandage until he himself bids you."

Franz looked at Gaetano, to see, if possible, what he thought of this proposal.

"Ah!" replied he, guessing Franz's thought, "I know this merits reflection."

"What should you do in my place?"

"I, who have nothing to lose — I should go."

"You would accept?"

"Yes, were it only out of curiosity."

"There is something very curious about this chief, then?"

"Listen," said Gaetano, lowering his voice, "I do not know if what they say is true —"

He stopped to look if any one was near.

"What do they say?"

"That this chief inhabits a cavern to which the Pitti Palace is nothing."

"What nonsense!" said Franz, reseating himself.

"It is no nonsense, it is quite true. Cama, the pilot of the 'Saint Ferdinand,' went in once, and he came back amazed, vowing that such treasures were only to be heard of in fairy tales."

"Do you know," observed Franz, "that with such stories you would make me enter the enchanted cavern of Ali Baba?"

"I tell you what I have been told."

"Then you advise me to accept?"

"Oh, I don't say that; your excellency will do as you please; I should be sorry to advise you in the matter."

Franz reflected a few moments; felt that a man so rich could not have any intention of plundering him of what little he had, and seeing only the prospect of a good supper, he accepted. Gaetano departed with the reply. Franz was prudent, and wished to learn all he possibly could concerning his host; he turned towards the sailor,

who, during this dialogue, had sat gravely plucking the partridges, with the air of a man proud of his office, and asked him how these men had landed, as no vessel of any kind was visible. "Never mind that," returned the sailor, "I know their vessel."

"Is it a very beautiful vessel?"

"I would not wish for a better to sail around the world."

"Of what burden is she?"

"About a hundred tons; but she is built to stand any weather. She is what the English call a yacht."

"Where was she built?"

"I know not, but my own opinion is, she is a Genoese."

"And how did a leader of smugglers," continued Franz, "venture to build a vessel designed for such a purpose at Genoa?"

"I did not say that the owner was a smuggler," replied the sailor.

"No, but Gaetano did, I thought."

"Gaetano had only seen the vessel from a distance; he had not then spoken to any one."

"And if this person be not a smuggler, who is he?"

"A wealthy signor, who travels for his pleasure."

"Come," thought Franz, "he is still more mysterious since the two accounts do not agree. What is his name?"

"If you ask him he says, Sinbad the Sailor; but I doubt its being his real name."

"Sinbad the sailor?"

"Yes."

"And where does he reside?"

"On the sea."

"What country does he come from?"

"I do not know."

"Have you ever seen him?"

"Sometimes."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Your excellency will judge for yourself."

"Where will he receive me?"

"No doubt in the subterranean palace Gaetano told you of."

"Have you never had the curiosity, when you have landed and found this island deserted, to seek for this enchanted palace?"

"Oh, yes, more than once, but always in vain; we examined the grotto all over, but we never could find the slightest trace of any opening; they say that the door is not opened by a key, but a magical word."

"Decidedly," muttered Franz, "this is an adventure of the Arabian Nights."

"His excellency waits for you," said a voice, which he recognized as that of the sentinel.

He was accompanied by two of the yacht's crew. Franz drew his handkerchief from his pocket and presented it to the man who had spoken to him. Without uttering a word, they bandaged his eyes with a care that showed their apprehensions of his committing some indiscretion. Afterwards he was made to promise he would not make the least attempt to raise the bandage. He promised. Then his two guides took his arms, and he advanced, guided by them, and preceded by the sentinel. After advancing about thirty paces he smelt the appetizing odor of the kid that was roasting, and knew thus that he was passing the bivouac; they then led him on about fifty paces farther, evidently advancing towards the shore, where they would not allow Gaetano to penetrate—a refusal he could now comprehend. Presently, by a change in the atmosphere, he comprehended that they were entering a cave; after going on for a few seconds more he heard a crackling, and it seemed to him as though the atmosphere again changed, and became balmy and perfumed. At length his feet touched on a thick and soft carpet, and his guides let go their hold of him. There was a moment's silence, and then a voice, in excellent French, although with a foreign accent, said:

"Welcome, sir. I beg you will remove your bandage."

It may be supposed, then, Franz did not wait for a repetition of this permission, but took off the handkerchief, and found himself in the presence of a man from thirty-eight to forty years of age, dressed in a Tunisian costume, that is to say, a red cap with a long blue silk tassel, a vest of black cloth embroidered with gold, pantaloons of deep red, large and full gaiters of the same color, embroidered with gold, like the vest, and yellow slippers; he had a splendid cachemire around his waist, and a small sharp and crooked cangiar was passed through his girdle. Although of a paleness that was almost livid, this man had a remarkably handsome face; his eyes were penetrating and sparkling; a nose quite straight, and projecting direct from the brow, gave out the Greek type in all its purity, whilst his teeth, as white as pearls, were set off to admiration by the black moustache that encircled them.

This pallor was so peculiar that it seemed as though it were that which would be exhibited by a man who had been enclosed for a long time in a tomb, and who was unable to resume the healthy glow and hue of the living. He was not particularly tall, but extremely well made, and, like the men of the south, had small hands and feet. But what astonished Franz, who had treated Gaetano's description as a fable, was the splendor of the apartment in which he found himself. The entire chamber was lined with crimson brocade, worked with flowers of gold. In a recess was a kind of divan surmounted with a stand of Arabian swords in silver scabbards, and the handles resplendent with gems; from the ceiling hung a lamp of Venice glass, of beautiful shade and color, whilst the feet rested on a Turkey carpet in which they sunk to the instep; tapestry hung before the door by which Franz had entered, and also in front of another door, leading into a second apartment, which seemed to be brilliantly lighted up. The host gave Franz time for his surprise, and, moreover, rendered him look for look, not even taking his eyes off him.

"Sir," he said, after some pause, "a thousand excuses for the precaution taken in your introduction hither; but as, during the greater portion of the year, this island is deserted, if the secret of this abode were discovered, I should, doubtless, find, on my return, my temporary retirement in a great state of disorder, which would be exceedingly annoying, not for the loss it occasioned me, but because I should not have the certainty I now possess of separating myself from all the rest of mankind at pleasure. Let me now endeavor to make you forget this temporary unpleasantness, and offer you what no doubt you did not expect to find here, that is to say, a tolerable supper and pretty comfortable beds."

"*Ma foi!* my dear sir," replied Franz, "make no apologies. I have always observed that they bandage people's eyes who penetrate enchanted palaces, for instance those of Raoul in the *Huguenots*, and really I have nothing to complain of, for what I see is a sequel to the wonders of the Arabian Nights."

"Alas! I may say with Lucullus, if I could have anticipated the honor of your visit, I would have prepared for it. But such as is my hermitage, it is at your disposal; such as is my supper, it is yours to share, if you will. Ali, is the supper ready?"

At this moment the tapestry moved aside, and a Nubian, black as ebony, and dressed in a plain white tunic, made a sign to his master that all was prepared in the *salle-à-manger*.

"Now," said the unknown to Franz, "I do not know if you are of my opinion, but I think nothing is more annoying than to remain two or three hours *tête-à-tête* without knowing by name or appellation how to address one another. Pray observe that I too much respect the laws of hospitality to ask your name or title. I only request you to give me one by which I may have the pleasure of addressing you. As for myself, that I may put you at your ease, I tell you that I am generally called 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"And I," replied Franz, "will tell you, as I only require his wonderful lamp to make me precisely like Aladdin, that I see no reason why at this moment I should not be called Aladdin. That will keep us from going away from the east, whither I am tempted to think I have been conveyed by some good genius."

"Well, then, Signor Aladdin," replied the singular Amphytrion, "you heard our repast announced; will you now take the trouble to enter the *salle-à-manger*, your humble servant going first to show you the way?"

At these words, moving aside the tapestry, Sinbad preceded his guest. Franz proceeded from one enchantment to another; the table was splendidly covered, and once convinced of this important point, he cast his eyes around him. The *salle-à-manger* was scarcely less striking than the boudoir he had just left; it was entirely of marble, with antique bas-reliefs of priceless value; and at the four corners of this apartment, which was oblong, were four magnificent statues, having baskets on their heads. These baskets contained four pyramids of most splendid fruit; there were the pineapples of Sicily, pomegranates of Malaga, oranges from the Balearic Isles, peaches from France, and dates from Tunis.

The supper consisted of a roast pheasant, garnished with Corsican blackbirds; a boar's ham *à la gelée*; a quarter of a kid *à la tartare*; a glorious turbot, and a gigantic lobster. Between these large dishes were smaller ones, containing various dainties. The dishes were of silver, and the plates of Japanese china.

Franz rubbed his eyes in order to assure himself that this was not a dream. Ali alone was present to wait at table, and acquitted himself so admirably that the guest complimented his host thereupon.

"Yes," replied he, whilst he did the honors of the supper with much ease and grace—"yes, he is a poor devil who is much devoted to me, and does all he can to prove it. He remembers I saved his life, and as he has a

regard for his head, he feels some gratitude towards me for having kept it on his shoulders."

Ali approached his master, took his hand, and kissed it.

"Would it be impertinent, Signor Sinbad," said Franz, "to ask the particulars of this kindness?"

"Oh! they are simple enough," replied the host. "It seems the fellow had been caught wandering nearer to the harem of the Bey of Tunis than etiquette permits to one of his color, and he was condemned by the Bey to have his tongue cut out, and his hand and head cut off; the tongue the first day, the hand the second, and the head the third. I always had a desire to have a mute in my service, so learning the day his tongue was cut out, I went to the Bey, and proposed to give him for Ali a splendid double-barrelled gun, which I knew he was very desirous of having. He hesitated a moment, he was so very desirous to complete the poor devil's punishment. But when I added to the gun an English cutlass with which I had shivered his highness's yataghan to pieces, the Bey yielded, and agreed to forgive the hand and head, but on condition he never again set foot in Tunis. This was a useless clause in the bargain, for whenever the coward sees the first glimpse of the shores of Africa, he runs down below, and can only be induced to appear again when we are out of sight of one quarter of the globe."

Franz remained a moment mute and pensive, hardly knowing what to think of the half-kindness, half-cruelty, with which his host related the brief narrative.

"And, like the celebrated sailor whose name you have assumed," he said, by way of changing the conversation, "you pass your life in travelling?"

"Yes! I made a vow at a time when I little thought I should ever be able to accomplish it," said the unknown, with a singular smile; "and I made some others also, which I hope I may fulfil in due season."

Although Sinbad pronounced these words with much calmness, his eyes darted gleams of singular ferocity.

"You have suffered a great deal, sir?" said Franz, inquiringly.

Sinbad started and looked fixedly at him, as he replied, "What makes you suppose so?"

"Everything!" answered Franz — "your voice, your look, your pallid complexion, even the life you lead."

"I! I live the happiest life possible, the real life of a pacha. I am king of all creation. I am pleased with one place, and stay there; I get tired of it, and leave it; I am free as a bird, and have wings like one; my attendants obey me at a signal. Sometimes I amuse myself by carrying off from human justice some bandit it is in quest of, some criminal whom it pursues. Then I have my mode of dispensing justice, silent and sure, without respite or appeal, which condemns or pardons, and which no one sees. Ah! if you had tasted of my life, you would not desire any other, and would never return to the world unless you had some great project to accomplish there."

"A vengeance, for instance!" observed Franz.

The unknown fixed on the young man one of those looks which penetrate into the depths of the heart and thoughts.

"And why a vengeance?" he asked.

"Because," replied Franz, "you seem to me like a man who, persecuted by society, has a fearful account to settle with it."

"Ah!" responded Sinbad, laughing with his singular laugh, which displayed his white and sharp teeth. "You have not guessed rightly! Such as you see me I am, a sort of philosopher, and one day perhaps I shall go to Paris to rival M. Appert and the little man in the blue cloak."

"And will that be the first time you ever took that journey?"

"Yes, it will. I must seem to you by no means curious, but I assure you that it is not my fault I have delayed it so long — it will happen one day or the other."

"And do you propose to make this journey very shortly?"

"I do not know; it depends on circumstances which depend on certain arrangements!"

"I should like to be there at the time you come, and I will endeavor to repay you as far as lies in my power for your liberal hospitality displayed to me at Monte-Cristo."

"I should avail myself of your offer with pleasure," replied the host, "but, unfortunately, if I go there, it will be in all probability incognito."

The supper appeared to have been supplied solely for Franz, for the unknown scarcely touched one or two dishes of the splendid banquet, to which his guest did ample justice. Then Ali brought on the dessert, or rather took the baskets from the hands of the statues and placed them on the table. Between the two baskets he placed a small silver cup, closed with a lid of the same. The care with which Ali placed this cup on the table roused Franz's curiosity. He raised the lid and saw a kind of greenish paste, something like preserved angelica, but which was perfectly unknown to him. He replaced the lid, as ignorant of what the cup contained as he was before he had looked at it, and then casting his eyes towards his host, he saw him smile at his disappointment.

"You cannot guess," said he, "what there is in that small vase, can you?"

"No, I really cannot."

"Well, then, that kind of green preserve is nothing less than the ambrosia which Hebe served at the table of Jupiter!"

"But," replied Franz, "this ambrosia, no doubt, in passing through mortal hands, has lost its heavenly appellation and assumed a human name; in vulgar phrase, what may you term this composition, for which, to say the truth, I do not feel any particular desire?"

"Ah! thus it is that our material origin is revealed,"

cried Sinbad; "we frequently pass so near to happiness without seeing, without regarding it, or if we do see and regard it, yet without recognizing it. Are you a man for the substantial, and is gold your god? Taste this, and the mines of Peru and Guzerat and Golconda are opened to you. Are you a man of imagination—a poet? taste this, and the boundaries of possibility disappear; the fields of infinite space open to you, you advance free in heart, in mind, into the boundless realms of unfettered reverie. Are you ambitious, and do you seek after the greatnesses of the earth? taste this, and in an hour you will be a king, not a king of a petty kingdom hidden in some corner of Europe, like France, Spain, or England, but king of the world, king of the universe, king of creation—without bowing at the feet of Satan, you will be king and master of all the kingdoms of the earth. Is it not tempting, what I offer you, and is it not an easy thing, since it is only to do thus?—look!"

At these words he uncovered the small cup, which contained the substance so lauded, took a teaspoonful of the magic sweetmeat, raised it to his lips and swallowed it slowly, with his eyes half shut and his head bent backwards.

Franz did not disturb him whilst he absorbed his favorite *bonne bouche*, but when he had finished he inquired:

"What, then, is this precious stuff?"

"Did you ever hear," he replied, "of the Old Man of the Mountain who attempted to assassinate Philippe Augustus?"

"Of course I have!"

"Well, you know he reigned over a rich valley which was overhung by the mountain whence he derived his picturesque name. In this valley were magnificent gardens planted by Hassen-ben-Sabah, and in these gardens isolated pavilions. Into these pavilions he admitted the elect; and there, says Marco Polo, gave them to eat a cer-

tain herb, which transported them to paradise in the midst of ever-blooming shrubs, ever-ripe fruit, and ever-lovely virgins. But what these happy persons took for reality, was but a dream; but it was a dream so soft, so voluptuous, so enthralling, that they sold themselves body and soul to him who gave it to them, and obedient to his orders as those of a deity, struck down the marked victim, died in torture without a murmur; believing that the death they underwent was but a quick transition to that life of delights of which the holy herb, now before you, had given them a slight foretaste."

"Then," cried Franz, "it is hashish! I know that — by name at least."

"That is it, precisely, Signor Aladdin; it is hashish — the purest and most unadulterated hashish of Alexandria — the hashish of Abou-Gor, the celebrated maker, the only man, the man to whom there should be built a palace, inscribed with these words, '*A grateful world to the dealer in happiness.*'"

"Do you know," said Franz, "I have a very great inclination to judge for myself of the truth or exaggeration of your eulogies!"

"Judge for yourself, Signor Aladdin — judge, but do not confine yourself to one trial. Like everything else, we must habituate the senses to a fresh impression, gentle or violent, sad or joyous. There is a struggle in nature against this divine substance — in nature which is not made for joy and clings to pain. Nature subdued must yield in the combat, the dream must succeed to reality, and then the dream reigns supreme, then the dream becomes life, and life becomes the dream. But what changes occur! it is only by comparing the pains of actual being with the joys of the assumed existence, that you would desire to live no longer, but to dream thus forever! When you return to this mundane sphere, from your visionary world, you would seem to leave a Neapolitan spring for a Lapland winter — to quit paradise for earth — heaven

for hell! Taste the hashish, guest of mine — taste the hashish!”

Franz's only reply was to take a teaspoonful of the marvellous preparation, about as much in quantity as his host had eaten, and lift it to his mouth.

“*Diable!*” he said, after having swallowed the divine preserve. “I do not know if the result will be as agreeable as you describe, but the thing does not appear to me as succulent as you say.”

“Because your palate has not yet attained the sublimity of the substances it flavors. Tell me, the first time you tasted oysters, tea, porter, truffles, and sundry other dainties which you now adore, did you like them? Could you comprehend how the Romans stuffed their pheasants with assafoetida, and the Chinese eat swallows' nests? Eh? No! Well, it is the same with hashish; only eat it for a week, and nothing in the world will seem to you to equal the delicacy of its flavor, which now appears to you sleepy and distasteful. Let us now go into the chamber beside you, which is your apartment, and Ali will bring us coffee and pipes.”

They both arose, and whilst he who called himself Sinbad — and whom we have occasionally named so, that we might, like his guest, have some title by which to distinguish him — gave some orders to the servant, Franz entered into the adjoining apartment. It was simply yet richly furnished. It was round, and a large divan completely encircled it. Divans, walls, ceiling, floor, were all covered with magnificent skins, as soft and downy as the richest carpets; there were skins of the lions of Atlas, with their large manes; skins of the Bengal tigers, with their striped hides; skins of the panthers of the Cape, spotted beautifully, like those that appeared to Dante; skins of the bears of Siberia, the foxes of Norway, etc.; and all these skins were strewn in profusion one on the other, so that it seemed like walking over the most mossy turf, or reclining on the most luxurious bed.

Both laid themselves down on the divan; chibouques, with jasmine tubes and amber mouth-pieces, were within reach, and all prepared so that there was no need to smoke the same pipe twice. Each of them took one, which Ali lighted, and then retired to prepare the coffee. There was a moment's silence, during which Sinbad gave himself up to thoughts that seemed to occupy him incessantly, even in the midst of his conversation, and Franz abandoned himself to that mute reverie into which we always sink when smoking excellent tobacco, which seems to remove with its fume all the troubles of the mind, and to give the smoker in exchange all the visions of the soul. Ali brought in the coffee.

"How do you take it?" inquired the unknown, "*à la Française*, or *à la Turque*, strong or weak, sugar or none, cool or boiling? As you please, it is ready in all ways."

"I will take it *à la Turque*," replied Franz.

"And you are right," said his host; "it shows you have a tendency for an Oriental life. Ah! those Orientals! they are the only men who know how to live. As for me," he added, with one of those singular smiles which did not escape the young man, "when I have completed my affairs in Paris, I shall go and die in the East, and should you wish to see me again, you must seek me at Cairo, Bagdad, or Ispahan."

"*Ma foi!*" said Franz, "it would be the easiest thing in the world, for I feel eagles' wings springing out at my shoulders, and with these wings I could make a tour of the world in four-and-twenty hours."

"Ah! ah! it is the hashish that is operating. Well, unfurl your wings and fly into superhuman regions; fear nothing; there is a watch over you; and if your wings, like those of Icarus, melt before the sun, we are here to receive you."

He then said some Arabian words to Ali, who made a sign of obedience and withdrew, but not to any distance. As to Franz, a strange transformation had taken place in

him. All the bodily fatigue of the day and all the preoccupation of mind which the events of the evening had brought on, disappeared, as they would at that first feeling of sleep, when we are still sufficiently conscious to be aware of the coming of slumber. His body seemed to acquire an airy lightness, his perception brightened in a remarkable manner, his senses seemed to redouble their power, the horizon continued to expand, but it was not that gloomy horizon over which a vague alarm prevails, and which he had seen before he slept; but a blue, transparent, unbounded horizon, with all the blue of the ocean, all the spangles of the sun, all the perfumes of the summer breeze; then in the midst of the songs of his sailors — songs so clear and sounding that they would have made divine harmony had their notes been taken down — he saw the Isle of Monte-Cristo, no longer as a threatening rock in the midst of the waves, but as an oasis lost in the desert; then as the bark approached the songs became louder, for an enchanting and mysterious harmony rose to heaven from this island, as some fay, like Lorelei, or some enchanter, like Amphion, had decreed to attract thither a soul, or build there a city.

At length the bark touched the shore, but without effort, without shock, as lips touch lips, and he entered the grotto amidst continued strains of most delicious melody. He descended, or rather seemed to descend, several steps, inspiring the fresh and balmy air, like that which may be supposed to reign around the grotto of Circe, formed from such perfumes as set the mind a-dreaming, and such fires as burn the very senses; and he saw again all he had seen before his sleep, from Sinbad, his singular host, to Ali, the mute attendant: then all seemed to fade away and become confused before his eyes, like the last shadows of the magic lantern before it is extinguished, and he was again in the chamber of statues, lighted only by one of those pale and antique lamps which watch in the dead of the night over the sleep of pleasure. They were the same statues, rich in

form, in attraction, and poesy, with eyes of fascination, smiles of love, and "bright and flowing hair." They were Phryne, Cleopatra, Messalina, those three celebrated courtesans; then amongst them glided, like a pure ray, like a Christian angel in the midst of Olympus, one of those chaste figures, those calm shadows, those soft visions, which seemed to veil its virgin brow before these marble wantons. Then these three statues advanced towards him with looks of love, and approached the couch on which he was reposing, their feet hidden in their long tunics, their throats bare, hair flowing like waves, and assuming attitudes which the gods could not resist, but which saints withstood, and looks inflexible and ardent, like the serpent's on the bird, and then he gave way before these looks, as painful as a powerful grasp and as delightful as a kiss.

It seemed to Franz that he closed his eyes, and thought that in the last look he gave he saw the modest statue completely veiled, and then with his eyes closed upon all nature his senses awoke to impassible impressions, and he was under the painful yet delicious enthrallment produced by the hashish, whose enchantment had brought up this marvellous and thrilling vision.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WAKING.

WHEN Franz returned to himself, exterior objects seemed a second portion of his dream; he thought himself in a sepulchre, into which scarcely penetrated (and then like a look of pity) a ray of the sun; he stretched forth his hand and touched stone; he rose to his feet and found himself lying on his burnoose in a bed of dry heather, very soft and odoriferous. The vision had entirely fled, and as if the statues had been but shadows coming from their tomb during his dream, they vanished at his waking.

He advanced several paces towards the point whence the light came, and to all the excitement of his dream succeeded the calmness of reality. He found that he was in a grotto, went towards the opening, and through a kind of fanlight saw a blue sea and an azure sky. The air and water were shining in the beams of the morning sun, on the shore the sailors were sitting chatting and laughing, and at ten yards from them the bark was at anchor, undulating gracefully on the water. There for some time he enjoyed the fresh breeze which played on his brow, and listened to the dash of the waves on the beach, leaving against the rocks a lace of foam as white as silver.

He was for some time without reflection or thought for the divine charm which is in the things of nature, especially after a fantastic dream; then gradually this view of outward matters, so calm, so pure, so grand, reminded him of the illusiveness of a dream, and remembrance became busy again in his memory.

He recalled his arrival on the island, his presentation to

a smuggler chief, a subterranean palace full of splendor, an excellent supper, and a spoonful of hashish. It seemed, however, even in the very face of open day, that at least a year had elapsed since all these things had passed; so deep was the impression made in his mind by the dream, and so strong a hold had it taken of his imagination. Thus every now and then his fancy, placed amidst the sailors or seated on a rock, saw undulating in the vessel one of those shadows which had shared his dreams with their looks and their kisses. Otherwise his head was perfectly clear, and his limbs entirely reposed; he was free from the slightest headache; on the contrary, he felt a certain degree of lightness, a faculty for absorbing the pure air, and enjoying the bright sunshine more vividly than ever.

He went gayly up to the sailors, who rose as soon as they perceived him, and the patron, accosting him, said:

"The Signor Sinbad has left his compliments for your excellency, and desired us to express the regret he feels at not being able to take his leave in person, but he trusts you will excuse him, as very important business calls him to Malaga."

"So then, Gaetano," said Franz, "this is then all reality; there exists a man who has received me in this isle, entertained me right royally, and has departed whilst I was asleep."

"He exists as certainly as that you may see his small yacht with all her sails spread; and if you will use your glass, you will, in all probability, recognize your host in the midst of his crew."

So saying, Gaetano pointed in a direction in which a small vessel was making sail towards the southern point of Corsica.

Franz adjusted his telescope, and directed it towards the bark.

Gaetano was not mistaken. At the stern the mysterious stranger was standing up, looking towards the shore, and holding a spy-glass in his hand; he was attired as he had

been on the previous evening, and waved his pocket-handkerchief to his guest in token of adieu.

Franz returned the salute by shaking his handkerchief as an exchange of signals.

After a second, a slight cloud of smoke was seen at the stern of the vessel, which rose gracefully as it expanded in the air, and then Franz heard a slight report.

"There! do you hear?" observed Gaetano; "he is bidding you adieu!" The young man took his carbine and fired it into the air, but without any idea that the noise could be heard at the distance which separated the yacht from the shore.

"What are your excellency's orders?" inquired Gaetano.

"In the first place, light me a torch."

"Ah, yes! I understand," replied the patron; "to find the entrance to the enchanted apartment. With much pleasure, your excellency, if it would amuse you, and I will get you the torch you ask for. But I, too, have had the idea you have, and two or three times the same fancy has come over me; but I have always given it up. Giovanni, light a torch," he added, "and give it to his excellency."

Giovanni obeyed. Franz took the lamp, and entered the subterranean grotto, followed by Gaetano. He recognized the place where he had awoke by the bed of heather that was there, but it was in vain that he carried his torch all around the exterior surface of the grotto; he saw nothing, unless that, by traces of smoke, others had before him attempted the same thing, and like him in vain. Yet he did not leave a foot of this granite wall, as impenetrable as futurity, without strict scrutiny; he did not see a fissure without introducing the blade of his hunting-sword in it, nor a projecting point on which he did not lean and press in the hopes it would give way; all was vain, and he lost two hours in his attempts, which were at last utterly useless.

At the end of this time he gave up his research, and Gaetano smiled.

When Franz appeared again on the shore, the yacht only seemed like a small white speck in the horizon; he looked again through his glass, but even then he could not distinguish anything. Gaetano reminded him that he had come for the purpose of shooting goats, which he had utterly forgotten. He took his fowling-piece and began to hunt over the isle with the air of a man who is fulfilling a duty rather than enjoying a pleasure, and at the end of a quarter of an hour he had killed a goat and two kids. These animals, though wild and agile as chamois, were too much like domestic goats, and Franz could not consider them as game.

Moreover, other ideas much more powerful occupied his mind. Since the evening before, he had really been the hero of one of the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*, and he was irresistibly attracted towards the grotto. Then, in spite of the failure of his first search, he began a second, after having told Gaetano to roast one of the two kids. The second visit was a long one, and when he returned the kid was roasted and the repast ready.

Franz was sitting on the spot where he was on the previous evening, when his mysterious host had invited him to supper, and he saw the little yacht, now like a sea-gull on the wave, continuing her flight towards Corsica.

"Why," he remarked to Gaetano, "you told me that Signor Sinbad was going to Malaga, whilst it seems he is in the direction of Porto-Vecchio."

"Don't you remember," said the patron, "I told you that amongst the crew there were two Corsican brigands?"

"True! and he is going to land them," added Franz.

"Precisely so," replied Gaetano. "Ah! he is an individual who fears neither God nor devil, they say, and would at any time run fifty leagues out of his course to do a poor devil a service."

"But such services as these might involve him with the authorities of the country in which he practises this kind of philanthropy," said Franz.

"And what cares he for that?" replied Gaetano, with a laugh, "or any authorities? he smiles at them; let them try to pursue him — why, in the first place, his yacht is not a ship, but a bird, and he would beat any frigate three knots in every nine; and if he were to throw himself on the coast, why, ain't he certain of finding friends everywhere?"

It was perfectly clear that the Signor Sinbad, Franz's host, had the honor of being on excellent terms with the smugglers and bandits along the whole coast of the Mediterranean, which placed him in a position singular enough.

As to Franz, he had no longer any inducement to remain at Monte-Cristo. He had lost all hope of detecting the secret of the grotto; he consequently dispatched his breakfast, and his bark being ready, he hastened on board, and they were soon under way.

At the moment the bark began her course they lost sight of the yacht, as it disappeared in the Gulf of Porto-Vecchio. With it was effaced the last trace of the preceding night, and then supper, Sinbad, hashish, statues, all became a dream for Franz. The bark went on all day and all night, and the next morning, when the sun rose, they lost sight of Monte-Cristo.

When Franz had once again set foot on shore, he forgot, for the moment at least, the events which had just passed, whilst he finished his affairs of pleasure at Florence, and then thought of nothing but how he should rejoin his companion, who was awaiting him at Rome.

He set out, and on the Saturday evening reached the Place de la Douane by the *malle-poste*. An apartment, as we have said, had been retained beforehand, and thus he had but to go to the hotel of Maître Pastrini; but this was not so easy a matter, for the streets were thronged

with people, and Rome was already a prey to that low and feverish murmur which precedes all great events, and at Rome there are four great events in every year, the Carnival, the Holy Week, the Fête Dieu, and the Saint Peter. All the rest of the year the city is in that state of dull apathy, between life and death, which renders it similar to a kind of station between this world and the next; a sublime spot, a resting-place full of poetry and character, and at which Franz had already halted five or six times, and at each time found it more marvellous and striking. At last he made his way through this mob, which was continually increasing and more agitated, and reached the hotel. On his first inquiry, he was told, with the impertinence peculiar to hackney-coachmen who are hired and innkeepers with their house full, that there was no room for him at the Hôtel de Londres. Then he sent his card to Maître Pastrini, and demanded Albert de Morcerf. This plan succeeded, and Maître Pastrini himself ran to him, excusing himself for having made his excellency wait, scolding the waiters, taking the candlestick in his hand from the cicerone, who was ready to pounce on the traveller, and was about to lead him to Albert, when Morcerf himself appeared.

The apartment consisted of two small rooms and a closet. The two rooms looked on to the street, a fact which Maître Pastrini commented upon as an appreciable advantage. The remainder of the story was hired by a very rich gentleman, who was supposed to be a Sicilian or Maltese; but the host was unable to decide to which of the two nations the traveller belonged.

"Very good, Maître Pastrini," said Franz, "but we must have some supper instantly, and a carriage for to-morrow and the following days."

"As to supper," replied the landlord, "you shall be served immediately; but as for the carriage——"

"What as to the carriage?" exclaimed Albert. "Come, come, Maître Pastrini, no joking; we must have a carriage."

"Sir," replied the host, "we will do all in our power to procure you one — this is all I can say."

"And when shall we know?" inquired Franz.

"To-morrow morning," answered the innkeeper.

"Oh! the devil! then we shall pay the more, that is all; I see plainly enough. At Drake & Aaron's one pays twenty-five francs for common days, and thirty or thirty-five francs a day more for Sundays and *jêtes*; add five francs a day more for extras; that will make forty, and there's an end of it."

"I am afraid, if we offer them double, that we shall not procure a carriage."

"Then they must put horses to mine; it is a little the worse for the journey, but that's no matter."

"There are no horses."

Albert looked at Franz like a man who hears a reply he does not understand.

"Do you understand that, my dear Franz? no horses!" he said; "but can't we have post-horses?"

"They have been all hired this fortnight, and there are none left but those absolutely requisite for posting."

"What are we to say to this?" asked Franz.

"I say, that, when a thing completely surpasses my comprehension, I am accustomed not to dwell on that thing, but to pass to another. Is supper ready, Maître Pastrini?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Well, then, let us sup."

"But the carriage and horses?" said Franz.

"Be easy, my dear boy, they will come in due season; it is only a question of how much shall be charged for them."

Morcerf then, with that delightful philosophy which believes that nothing is impossible to a full purse and well-lined pocketbook, supped, went to bed, slept soundly, and dreamed he was racing all over Rome at the Carnival time in a coach with six horses.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ROMAN BANDITS.

THE next morning Franz woke first, and instantly rang the bell. The sound had not yet died away when Maître Pastrini himself entered.

"Well, excellency," said the landlord, triumphantly, and without waiting for Franz to question him, "I feared yesterday, when I would not promise you anything, that you were too late; there is not a single carriage to be had—that is, for the last three days."

"Yes," returned Franz, "that is for the very three days it is most necessary."

"What is the matter?" said Albert, entering, "no carriage to be had?"

"Just so," returned Franz, "you have guessed it."

"Well! your Eternal City is a devilish nice city."

"That is to say, excellency," replied Pastrini, who was desirous to keep up the dignity of the capital of the Christian world in the eyes of his guests, "that there are no carriages to be had from Sunday to Tuesday evening, but from now till Sunday you can have fifty if you please."

"Ah! that is something," said Albert, "to-day is Thursday, and who knows what may arrive between this and Sunday?"

"Ten or twelve thousand travellers will arrive," replied Franz, "which will make it still more difficult."

"My friend," said Morcerf, "let us enjoy the present without gloomy forebodings for the future."

"At least we can have a window?"

"Where?"

"Looking on the Rue du Cours."

"Ah, a window!" exclaimed Maître Pastrini, "utterly impossible; there was only one left on the fifth floor of the Doria Palace, and that has been let to a Russian prince for twenty sequins a day."

The two young men looked at each other with an air of stupefaction.

"Well," said Franz to Albert, "do you know what is the best thing we can do? It is to pass the Carnival at Venice; there we are sure of obtaining gondolas if we cannot have carriages."

"Ah! the devil! no," cried Albert; "I came to Rome to see the Carnival, and I will, though I see it on stilts."

"Bravo! an excellent idea; we will disguise ourselves as monster pulcinellos or shepherds of the Landes, and we shall have complete success."

"Do your excellencies still wish for a carriage from now to Sunday morning?"

"*Parbleu!*" said Albert, "do you think we are going to run about on foot in the streets of Rome like lawyers' clerks?"

"I hasten to comply with your excellencies' wishes; only, I tell you beforehand, the carriage will cost you six piastres a day."

"And as I am not a millionaire, like the gentleman in the next apartment," said Franz, "I warn you, that as I have been four times before at Rome, I know the prices of all the carriages; we will give you twelve piastres for to-day, to-morrow, and the day after, and then you will make a good profit."

"But, excellency—" said Pastrini, still striving to gain his point.

"Now go," returned Franz, "or I shall go myself and bargain with your *afflitatore*, who is mine also; he is an old friend of mine, who has plundered me pretty well already, and in the hope of making more out of me, he

will take a less price than the one I offer you; you will lose the preference, and that will be your fault."

"Do not give yourself the trouble, excellency," returned Maître Pastrini, with that smile of the Italian speculator who avows himself defeated; "I will do all I can, and I hope you will be satisfied."

"Ah, now we understand each other."

"When do you wish the carriage to be here?"

"In an hour."

"In an hour it will be at the door."

An hour after the vehicle was at the door; it was a hack conveyance, which was elevated to the rank of a private carriage in honor of the occasion, but, in spite of its humble exterior, the young men would have thought themselves happy to have secured it for the last three days of the Carnival.

"Excellency!" cried the cicerone, seeing Franz approach the window, "shall I bring the carriage nearer the palace?"

Accustomed as Franz was to the Italian phraseology, his first impulse was to look around him, but these words were addressed to him. Franz was the "excellency," the vehicle was the "carriage," and the Hôtel de Londres was the "palace."

Franz and Albert descended, the carriage approached the palace, their excellencies stretched their legs along the seats, the cicerone sprang into the seat behind.

"Where do your excellencies wish to go?" asked he.

"To Saint Peter's first, and then to the Colosseum," returned Albert.

But Albert did not know that it takes a day to see Saint Peter's and a month to study it. The day was passed at Saint Peter's alone. Suddenly the daylight began to fade away; Franz took out his watch—it was half-past four. They returned to the hotel; at the door Franz ordered the coachman to be ready at eight. He wished to show Albert the Colosseum by moonlight, as he had shown him

St. Peter's by daylight. When we show a friend a city one has already visited, we feel the same pride as when we point out a woman whose lover we have been. He was to leave the city by the Porto del Popolo, skirt the outer wall, and re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni; thus they would behold the Colosseum without being in some measure prepared by the sight of the Capitol, the Forum, the Arch of Septimus Severus, the Temple of Antonius and Faustina, and the Via Sacra.

They sat down to dinner. Maître Pastrini had promised them a banquet; he gave them a tolerable repast. At the end of the dinner he entered in person. Franz had concluded he came to hear his dinner praised, and began accordingly, but at the first word she interrupted him.

"Excellency," said he, "I am delighted to have your approbation, but it was not for that I came."

"Did you come to tell us that you had procured a carriage?" asked Albert, lighting a cigar.

"No; and your excellencies will do well not to think of that any longer; at Rome things can or cannot be done: when you are told anything cannot be done, there is an end of it."

"It is much more convenient at Paris — when anything cannot be done, you pay double, and it is done directly."

"That is what all the French say," returned Maître Pastrini, "and for that reason I do not understand why they travel."

"But," said Albert, emitting a volume of smoke, and balancing his chair on its hind legs, "only madmen or blockheads, such as we are, travel. Men in their senses do not quit their hotel in the Rue du Helder, their walk on the Boulevard de Gand, and the Café de Paris."

It is, of course, understood that Albert resided in the aforesaid *rue*, appeared every day on the fashionable walk, and dined frequently at the only *café* where you can really dine, that is, if you are on good terms with its frequenters.

Maître Pastrini remained silent for a short time; it was

evident that he was musing over this answer, which did not seem very clear.

"But," said Franz, in his turn interrupting his host's meditations, "you had some motive for coming here; may I beg to know what it was?"

"Ah, yes, you have ordered your carriage at eight o'clock precisely?"

"I have."

"You intend visiting *Il Colosseo*?"

"You mean the Colosseum?"

"It is the same thing. You have told your coachman to leave the city by the Porto del Popolo, to drive around the walls, and re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni?"

"These are my words exactly."

"Well, this route is impossible."

"Impossible!"

"Very dangerous, to say the least."

"Dangerous! and why?"

"On account of the famous Luigi Vampa."

"Pray who may this famous Luigi Vampa be?" inquired Albert; "he may be very famous at Rome, but I can assure you he is quite unknown at Paris."

"What! do you not know him?"

"I have not that honor."

"You have never heard his name?"

"Never."

"Well, then, he is a bandit, compared to whom the Decesaris and the Gasparones were mere children."

"Now, then, Albert," cried Franz, "here is a bandit for you at last."

"I forewarn you, Maître Pastrini, that I shall not believe one word of what you are going to tell us; having told you this, begin."

"Once upon a time ——"

"Well, go on."

Maître Pastrini turned around to Franz, who seemed to him the more reasonable of the two; we must do him

justice—he had had a great many Frenchmen in his house, but had never been able to comprehend them.

“Excellency,” said he, gravely, addressing Franz, “if you look upon me as a liar, it is useless for me to say anything; it was for your interest I ——”

“Albert does not say you are a liar, Maître Pastrini,” said Franz; “but that he will not believe what you are going to tell us—but I will believe all you say; so proceed.”

“But if your excellency doubts my veracity ——”

“Maître Pastrini,” returned Franz, “you are more susceptible than Cassandra, who was a prophetess, and yet no one believed her; whilst you, at least, are sure of the credence of half your auditory. Come, sit down, and tell us all about M. Vampa.”

“I had told your excellency he is the most famous bandit we have had since the days of Mastrilla.”

“Well, what has this bandit to do with the order I have given the coachman, to leave the city by the Porto del Popolo and to re-enter by the Porte San Giovanni?”

“This,” replied Maître Pastrini, “that you will go out by one, but I very much doubt your returning by the other.”

“Why?” asked Franz.

“Because after nightfall you are not safe fifty yards from the gates.”

“On your honor, is that true?” cried Albert.

“M. le comte,” returned Maître Pastrini, hurt at Albert’s repeated doubts of the truth of his assertions, “I do not say this to you but to your companion, who knows Rome, and knows, too, that these things are not to be laughed at.”

“My dear fellow,” said Albert, turning to Franz, “here is an admirable adventure; we will fill our carriage with pistols, blunderbusses, and double-barrelled guns. Luigi Vampa comes to take us, and we take him—we bring him

back to Rome, and present him to his holiness the pope, who asks how he can repay so great a service; then we merely ask for a carriage and a pair of horses, and we see the Carnival in the carriage, and doubtless the Roman people will crown us at the Capitol, and proclaim us, like Curtius and Horatius Cocles, the preservers of the country."

Whilst Albert proposed this scheme, Maître Pastrini's face assumed an expression impossible to describe.

"And pray," asked Franz, "where are these pistols, blunderbusses, and other deadly weapons with which you intend filling the carriage?"

"Not out of my armory, for at Terracina I was plundered even of my hunting-knife."

"I shared the same fate at Aquependente."

"Do you know, Maître Pastrini," said Albert, lighting a second cigar at the first, "that this practice is very convenient for robbers, and that it seems to have been an arrangement between them?"

Doubtless Maître Pastrini found this pleasantry compromising, for he only answered half the question, and then he spoke to Franz, as the only one likely to listen with attention.

"Your excellency knows that it is not customary to defend yourself when attacked by bandits."

"What!" cried Albert, whose courage revolted at the idea of being plundered tamely, "not make any resistance?"

"No, for it would be useless; what could you do against a dozen bandits who spring out from some pit, ruin, or aqueduct, and level their pieces at you?"

"Eh, *parbleu!* they should kill me."

The innkeeper turned to Franz with an air that seemed to say, "Your friend is decidedly mad."

"My dear Albert," returned Franz, "your answer is sublime, and worthy the '*Let him die*' of Corneille, only when Horace made that answer, the safety of Rome was

concerned ; but as for us, it is only to gratify a whim, and it would be ridiculous to risk our lives for so foolish a motive."

Albert poured himself out a glass of *lacryma Christi*, which he sipped at intervals, muttering some unintelligible words.

"Well, Maître Pastrini," said Franz, "now that my companion is quieted, and you have seen how peaceful my intentions are, tell me who is this Luigi Vampa. Is he a shepherd or a nobleman? — young or old? — tall or short? Describe him, in order that, if we meet him by chance, like Jean Sbogar or Lara, we may recognize him."

"You could not apply to any one better able to inform you on all these points, for I knew him when he was a child; and one day that I fell into his hands going from Ferentino to Alatri, he, fortunately for me, recollected me, and set me free, not only without ransom, but made me a present of a very splendid watch, and related his history to me."

"Let us see the watch," said Albert.

Maître Pastrini drew from his fob a magnificent Breguet, bearing the name of its maker, of Parisian manufacture, and a count's coronet.

"Here it is," said he.

"*Peste*," returned Albert, "I compliment you on it; I have its fellow," he took his watch from his waistcoat pocket, "and it cost me 3,000 francs."

"Let us hear the history," said Franz, motioning Maître Pastrini to seat himself.

"Your excellencies permit it?" asked the host.

"*Pardieu!*" cried Albert, "you are not a preacher, to remain standing."

The host sat down, after having made each of them a respectful bow, which meant to say that he was ready to tell them all they wished to know concerning Luigi Vampa.

"You tell me," said Franz, at the moment Maître Pastrini was about to open his mouth, "that you knew Luigi Vampa when he was a child—he is still a young man, then?"

"A young man! he is only two and twenty; he will gain himself a reputation."

"What do you think of that, Albert?—at two and twenty to be thus famous?"

"Yes, and at his age, Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon, who have all made some noise in the world, were not so advanced."

"So," continued Franz, "the hero of this history is only two and twenty?"

"Scarcely so much."

"Is he tall or short?"

"Of the middle height—about the same stature as his excellency," returned the host, pointing to Albert.

"Thanks for the comparison," said Albert, with a bow.

"Go on, Maître Pastrini," continued Franz, smiling at his friend's susceptibility. "To what class of society does he belong?"

"He was a shepherd boy attached to the farm of the Comte de San-Felice, situated between Palestrina and the Lake of Gabri; he was born at Pampinara, and entered the count's service when he was five years old; his father was also a shepherd, who owned a small flock and lived by the wool and the milk which he sold at Rome. When quite a child, the little Vampa was of a most extraordinary disposition. One day, when he was seven years old, he came to the curé of Palestrina, and prayed him to teach him to read; it was somewhat difficult, for he could not quit his flock; but the good curé went every day to say mass at a little hamlet too poor to pay a priest, and which, having no other name, was called Borgo; he told Luigi that he might meet him on his return, and that then he would give him a lesson, warning him that it would be

short, and that he must profit as much as possible by it. The child accepted joyfully.

"Every day Luigi led his flock to graze on the road that leads from Palestrina into Borgo; every day at nine o'clock in the morning the priest and the boy sat down on a bank by the wayside, and the little shepherd took his lesson out of the priest's breviary. At the end of three months he learned to read. This was not enough, he must now learn to write.

"The priest had made, by a teacher of writing at Rome, three alphabets — one large, one middling, and one small — and pointed out to him that by the help of a sharp instrument he could trace the letters on a slate, and thus learn to write.

"The same evening, when the flock was safe at the farm, the little Luigi hastened to the smith of Palestrina, took a large nail, forged it, sharpened it, and formed a sort of style. The next morning he had collected a quantity of slates and commenced. At the end of three months he had learned to write. The curé, astonished at his quickness and intelligence, made him a present of pens, paper, and penknife. This was a fresh labor, but nothing compared to the first. At the end of a week he wrote as well with the pen as with the style.

"The curé related this anecdote to the Comte de San-Felice, who sent for the little shepherd, made him read and write before him, ordered his attendants to let him eat with the domestics, and to give him two piastres a month. With this Luigi purchased books and pencils.

"He applied to everything his imitative powers, and like Giotto when young, he drew on the slate sheep, houses, and trees. Then with his knife he began to carve all sorts of objects in wood; it was thus that Pinelli, the famous sculptor, had commenced.

"A girl of six or seven — that is, a little younger than Vampa — tended sheep on a farm near Palestrina; she was an orphan, born at Valmontone, and was named Teresa.

"The two children met, sat down near each other, let their flocks mingle together, played, laughed, and conversed together; in the evening they separated the flocks of the Comte de San-Felice from those of the Baron de Cervetri, and the children returned to their respective farms, promising to meet the next morning. The next day they kept their word, and thus grew up. Vampa was twelve, and Teresa eleven. And yet their natural disposition revealed itself.

"Besides his taste for the fine arts, which Luigi had carried as far as he could in his solitude, he was sad by fits, ardent by starts, angry by caprice, and always sarcastic. None of the lads of Pampinara, of Palestrina, or of Valmontone, had been able to gain any influence over him, or even to become his companion. His disposition (always inclined to exact concessions rather than to make them) kept him aloof from all friendships. Teresa alone ruled, by a look, a word, a gesture, this impetuous character, which yielded beneath the hand of a woman, and which beneath the hand of a man might have broken, but would never have bent or yielded.

"Teresa was, on the contrary, lively and gay, but coquetish to excess. The two piastres that Luigi received every month from the Comte de San-Felice's steward, and the price of all the little carvings in wood he sold at Rome, were expended in earrings, necklaces, and gold hairpins. So that, thanks to her friend's generosity, Teresa was the most beautiful and the best attired peasant near Rome.

"The two children grew up together, passing all their time with each other, and giving themselves up to the wild ideas of their different characters. Thus, in all their dreams, their wishes, and their conversations, Vampa saw himself the captain of a vessel, general of an army, or governor of a province. Teresa saw herself rich, superbly attired, and attended by a train of liveried domestics. Then, when they had thus passed the day in building castles in the air, they separated their flocks and de-

scended from the elevation of their dreams to the reality of their humble position.

“One day the young shepherd told the count’s steward he had seen a wolf come out of the Sabine mountains and prowl around his flock. The steward gave him a gun; this was what Vampa longed for. This gun had an excellent barrel made at Breschia and carrying a ball with the precision of an English rifle; but one day the count broke the stock and had then cast the gun aside. This, however, was nothing to a sculptor like Vampa; he examined the ancient stock, calculated what change it would require to adapt the gun to his shoulder, and made a fresh stock, so beautifully carved that it would have fetched fifteen or twenty piastres, had he chosen to sell it. But nothing could be farther from his thoughts. For a long time a gun had been the young man’s greatest ambition. In every country where independence has taken the place of liberty, the first desire of a manly heart is to possess a weapon which at once renders him capable of defence or attack, and, by rendering its owner terrible, makes him often redoubted.

“From this moment Vampa devoted all his leisure time in perfecting himself in the use of this precious weapon; he purchased powder and ball, and everything served him for a mark — the trunk of some old and moss-grown olive-tree, that grew on the Sabine mountains; the fox, as he quitted his earth on some marauding excursion; the eagle, that soared above their heads; and thus he soon became so expert that Teresa overcame the terror she at first felt at the report, and amused herself by watching him direct the ball wherever he pleased with as much accuracy as if placed by the hand.

“One evening a wolf emerged from a pine wood near which they were usually stationed; but the wolf had scarcely advanced ten yards ere he was dead. Proud of this exploit, Vampa took the dead animal on his shoulders and carried him to the farm.

"All these circumstances had gained Luigi considerable reputation. The man of superior abilities always finds admirers, go where he will. He was spoken of as the most adroit, the strongest, and the most courageous *contadino* for ten leagues around; and, although Teresa was universally allowed to be the most beautiful girl of the Sabines, no one had ever spoken to her of love, because it was known that she was beloved by Vampa. And yet the two young people had never declared their affection; they had grown together like two trees whose roots are mingled, whose branches intertwine, and whose perfume rises together to the heavens. Only their wish to see each other had become a necessity, and they would have preferred death to a day's separation.

"About this time a band of brigands, that had established themselves in the Lepini mountains, began to be much spoken of. The brigands had never been really extirpated from the neighborhood of Rome. Sometimes it wants a chief, but when a chief presents himself he rarely wants a band.

"The celebrated Cucumetto, pursued in the Abruzzo, driven out of the kingdom of Naples, where he carried on a regular war, had crossed the Garigliano, like Manfred, and had come between Sonnino and Juperno, to take refuge on the banks of the Amasine. He it was who strove to reorganize a band, and who followed the footsteps of Decesaris and Gasparone, whom he hoped to surpass. Many young men of Palestrina, Frascati, and Pampinara disappeared. Their disappearance at first caused much inquietude; but it was soon known that they had joined the band of Cucumetto. After some time Cucumetto became the object of universal attention; the most extraordinary traits of ferocious daring and brutality were related of him. One day he carried off a young girl, the daughter of a surveyor of Frosinone. The bandits' laws are positive: a young girl belongs first to him who carries her off, then the rest draw lots for her, and she is abandoned

to their brutality until death relieves her sufferings. When their parents are sufficiently rich to pay a ransom a messenger is sent to treat concerning it; the prisoner is hostage for the security of the messenger; should the ransom be refused, the prisoner is irrevocably lost. The young girl's lover was in Cucumetto's troop; his name was Carlini. When she recognized her lover the poor girl extended her arms to him, and believed herself safe; but Carlini felt his heart sink, for he but too well knew the fate that awaited her. However, as he was a favorite with Cucumetto, as he had for three years faithfully served him, as he had saved his life by shooting a dragoon who was about to cut him down, he hoped he would have pity on him. He took him apart, whilst the young girl, seated at the foot of a huge pine that stood in the centre of the forest, formed with her picturesque head-dress a veil to hide her face from the lascivious gaze of the bandits. There he told him all his affection for the prisoner, their promises of mutual fidelity, and how every night since he had been near they had met in a ruin.

"It so happened that night that Cucumetto had sent Carlini to a neighboring village, so that he had been unable to go to the place of meeting. Cucumetto had been there, however, by accident, as he said, and had carried the maiden off.

"Carlini besought his chief to make an exception in Rita's favor, as her father was rich and could pay a large ransom. Cucumetto seemed to yield to his friend's entreaties, and bade him find a shepherd to send to Rita's father at Frosinone. Carlini flew joyfully to Rita, telling her she was saved, and bidding her write to her father to inform him what had occurred, and that her ransom was fixed at three hundred piastres. Twelve hours' delay was all that was granted, that is, until nine the next morning.

"The instant the letter was written, Carlini seized it and hastened to the plain to find a messenger. He found

a young shepherd watching his flock. The natural messengers of the bandits are the shepherds, who live between the city and the mountains, between civilized and savage life. The boy undertook the commission, promising to be at Frosinone in less than an hour. Carlini returned, anxious to see his mistress, and announce the joyful intelligence. He found the troop in the glade, supping off the provisions exacted as contributions from the peasants; but his eye vainly sought Rita and Cucumetto amongst them. He inquired where they were, and was answered by a burst of laughter. A cold perspiration burst from every pore, and his hair stood on an end. He repeated his question. One of the bandits rose and offered him a glass filled with wine of Orvietto, saying :

“‘To the health of the brave Cucumetto and the fair Rita.’

“At this moment Carlini heard the cry of a woman; he divined the truth, seized the glass, broke it across the face of him who presented it, and rushed towards the spot from whence the cry came. After a hundred yards he turned the corner of a thicket, where he found Rita senseless in the arms of Cucumetto. At the sight of Carlini, Cucumetto rose, a pistol in each hand. The two brigands looked at each other for a moment; the one with a smile of lasciviousness on his lips, the other with the pallor of death on his brow. It seemed that something terrible was about to pass between these two men, but by degrees Carlini’s features relaxed; his hand, which had grasped one of the pistols in his belt, fell to his side. Rita lay between them. The moon lighted the group.

“‘Well,’ said Cucumetto, ‘have you executed your commission?’

“‘Yes, captain,’ returned Carlini. ‘At nine o’clock to-morrow morning Rita’s father will be here with the money.’

“‘It is well; in the meantime we will have a merry night; this young girl is charming and does credit to your

taste. Now, as I am not egotistical, we will return to our comrades and draw lots for her.'

"'You are determined, then, to abandon her to the common law?' said Carlini.

"'Why should an exception be made in her favor?'

"'I thought that my entreaties ——'

"'What right have you any more than the rest to ask for an exception?'

"'It is true.'

"'But never mind,' continued Cucumetto, laughing, 'sooner or later your turn will come.'

"Carlini's teeth clenched convulsively.

"'Now, then,' said Cucumetto, advancing towards the other bandits, 'are you coming?'

"'I follow you.'

"Cucumetto departed without losing sight of Carlini, for, doubtless, he feared lest he should strike him unawares; but nothing betrayed a hostile design on Carlini's part. He was standing, his arms folded, near Rita, who still was insensible. Cucumetto fancied for a moment the young man was about to take her in his arms and fly; but this mattered little to him, now Rita had been his, and as for the money, three hundred piastres distributed amongst the band was so small a sum that he cared little about it. He continued to follow the path to the glade; but to his great surprise Carlini arrived almost as soon as himself.

"'Let us draw lots! let us draw lots!' cried the brigands when they saw the chief.

"Their demand was fair, and the chief inclined his head in sign of acquiescence. The eyes of all shone fiercely as they made their demand, and the red light of the fire made them look like demons. The names of all, including Carlini, were placed in a hat, and the youngest of the band drew forth a ticket; the ticket bore the name of Diavolaccio. He was the man who had proposed to Carlini the health of their chief, and to whom Carlini replied by

breaking the glass across his face. A large wound, extending from the temple to the mouth, was bleeding profusely. Diavolaccio, seeing himself thus favored by fortune, burst into a loud laugh.

“‘Captain,’ said he, ‘just now Carlini would not drink your health when I proposed it to him; propose mine to him, and let us see if he will be more condescending to you than to me.’

“Every one expected an explosion on Carlini’s part; but, to their great surprise, he took a glass in one hand and a flask in the other, and filling it:

“‘Your health, Diavolaccio,’ said he, calmly, and he drank it off without his hand trembling in the least. Then sitting down by the fire, ‘My supper,’ said he, ‘my expedition has given me an appetite.’

“‘Well done, Carlini,’ cried the brigands. ‘That is acting like a good fellow;’ and they all formed a circle around the fire whilst Diavolaccio disappeared.

“Carlini ate and drank as if nothing had happened. The bandits looked on with astonishment at this singular conduct until they heard footsteps. They turned around, and saw Diavolaccio bearing the young girl in his arms. Her head hung back and her long hair swept the ground. As they entered the circle, the bandits could perceive, by the firelight, the unearthly pallor of the young girl and of Diavolaccio. This apparition was so strange and so solemn that every one rose, with the exception of Carlini, who remained seated, and ate and drank calmly. Diavolaccio advanced amidst the most pronounced silence, and laid Rita at the captain’s feet. Then every one could understand the cause of the unearthly pallor of the young girl and the bandit. A knife was plunged up to the hilt in Rita’s left breast. Every one looked at Carlini: the sheath at his belt was empty.

“‘Ah! ah!’ said the chief, ‘I now understand why Carlini stayed behind.’

“All savage natures appreciate a desperate deed. No

other of the bandits would, perhaps, have done the same, but they all understood what Carlini had done.

“‘Now, then,’ cried Carlini, rising in his turn, and approaching the corpse, his hand on the butt of one of his pistols, ‘does any one dispute the possession of this woman with me?’

“‘No,’ returned the chief, ‘she is thine.’

“Carlini raised her in his arms and carried her out of the circle of light caused by the fire. Cucumetto placed his sentinels for the night, and the bandits wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down before the fire.

“At midnight the sentinel gave the alarm, and in an instant all were on the alert. It was Rita’s father, who brought his daughter’s ransom in person.

“‘Here!’ said he to Cucumetto, ‘here are three hundred piastres; give me back my child.’

“But the chief, without taking the money, made a sign to him to follow him. The old man obeyed; they both advanced beneath the trees, through whose branches streamed the moonlight. Cucumetto stopped at last, and pointed to two persons grouped at the foot of a tree.

“‘There!’ said he, ‘demand thy child of Carlini, he will tell thee what has become of her;’ and he returned to his companions.

“The old man remained motionless; he felt that some great and unforeseen misfortune hung over his head. At length he advanced towards the group, which he could not comprehend. As he approached, Carlini raised his head, and the forms of two persons became visible to the old man’s eyes. A female lay on the ground, her head resting on the knees of a man, who was seated by her; as he raised his head, the female’s face became visible. The old man recognized his child, and Carlini recognized the old man.

“‘I expected thee,’ said the bandit to Rita’s father.

“‘Wretch!’ returned the old man, ‘what hast thou done?’ and he gazed with terror on Rita, pale and bloody;

a knife buried in her bosom. A ray of moonlight poured through the trees, and lighted up the face of the dead.

“‘Cucumetto had violated thy daughter,’ said the bandit. ‘I love her, therefore I slew her; for she would have served as the sport of the whole band.’

“The old man spoke not, and grew pale as death.

“‘Now,’ continued Carlini, ‘if I have done wrongly, avenge her,’ and withdrawing the knife from the wound in Rita’s bosom, he held it out to the old man with one hand, whilst with the other he tore open his vest.

“‘Thou hast done well!’ returned the old man in a hoarse voice; ‘embrace me, my son!’

“Carlini threw himself sobbing like a child into the arms of his mistress’s father. These were the first tears the man of blood had ever wept.

“‘Now,’ said the old man, ‘aid me to bury my child.’

“Carlini fetched two pickaxes; and the father and the lover began to dig at the foot of a huge oak beneath which the young girl was to repose. When the grave was formed, the father embraced her first and then the lover; afterwards, one taking the head, the other the feet, they placed her in the grave. Then they knelt on each side of the grave, and said the prayers of the dead. Then, when they had finished, they cast the earth over the corpse, until the grave was filled. Then, extending his hand, the old man said :

“‘I thank you, my son; and now leave me alone.’

“‘Yet —’ replied Carlini.

“‘Leave me, I command you!’

“Carlini obeyed, rejoined his comrades, folded himself in his cloak, and soon appeared as deep asleep as the rest. It had been resolved the night before to change their encampment. An hour before daybreak Cucumetto aroused his men, and gave the word to march. But Carlini would not quit the forest without knowing what had become of Rita’s father. He went towards the place where he had left him. He found the old man suspended from one of

the branches of the oak which shaded his daughter's grave. He took then an oath of bitter vengeance over the dead body of the one and the tomb of the other. But he was unable to complete this oath, for two days afterwards, in a rencounter with the Roman carbineers, Carlini was killed. There was some surprise, however, that, as he was with his face to the enemy, he should have received a ball between his shoulders. That astonishment ceased when one of the brigands remarked to his comrades that Cucumetto was stationed ten paces in Carlini's rear when he fell.

"On the morning of the departure from the forest of Frosinone, he had followed Carlini in the darkness, had heard his oath of vengeance, and, like a wise man, anticipated it. They told ten other stories of this bandit chief, each more singular than the other. Thus from Fondi to Perouse, every one trembles at the name of Cucumetto. These narratives were frequently the themes of conversations between Luigi and Teresa. The young girl trembled very much at all these tales; but Vampa reassured her with a smile, tapping the butt of his good fowling-piece, which threw its ball so well, and if that did not restore her courage, he pointed to a crow perched on some dead branch, took an aim, touched the trigger, and the bird fell dead at the foot of the tree.

"Time passed on, and the young people had settled to be married when Vampa should be twenty and Teresa nineteen years of age. They were both orphans, and had only their employers' leave to ask, which had already been sought and obtained. One day when they were talking over their plans for the future, they heard two or three reports of firearms, and then suddenly a man came out of the wood, near which the two young persons used to graze their flocks, and hurried towards them. When he came within hearing he exclaimed :

"'I am pursued; can you conceal me?'

"They knew full well that this fugitive must be a bandit; but there is an innate sympathy between the

Roman brigand and the Roman peasant, and the latter is always ready to aid the former. Vampa, without saying a word, hastened to the stone that closed up the entrance to their grotto, drew it away, made a sign to the fugitive to take refuge there, in a retreat unknown to every one, closed the stone upon him, and then went and resumed his seat by Teresa. Instantly afterwards four carbineers, on horseback, appeared on the edge of the wood; three of them appeared to be looking for the fugitive, whilst the fourth dragged a brigand prisoner by the neck. The three carbineers scrutinized on all sides, saw the young peasants, and galloping up, interrogated them. They had seen no one.

“‘That is very annoying,’ said the brigadier, ‘for the man we are looking for is the chief.’

“‘Cucumetto?’ cried Luigi and Teresa at the same moment.

“‘Yes,’ replied the brigadier. ‘And, as his head is valued at a thousand Roman crowns, there would have been five hundred for you if you had helped us to catch him.’

“The two young persons exchanged looks. The brigadier had a moment’s hope. Five hundred crowns are three thousand francs, and three thousand francs are a fortune for two poor orphans who are going to be married.

“‘Yes, it is very annoying,’ said Vampa, ‘but we have not seen him.’

“Then the carbineers scoured the country in different directions, but in vain. Then after a time they disappeared. Vampa then removed the stone and Cucumetto came out. He had seen through the crevices in the granite the two young peasants talking with the carbineers, and guessed the subject of their parley. He had read in the countenances of Luigi and Teresa their steadfast resolution not to surrender him, and he drew from his pocket a purse full of gold, which he offered to them. But Vampa raised his head proudly; as to Teresa, her eyes sparkled when

she thought of all the fine gowns and gay jewelry she could buy with this purse of gold.

"Cucumetto was a cunning fiend, and had assumed the form of a brigand instead of a serpent, and this look of Teresa revealed to him that she was a worthy daughter of Eve, and he returned to the forest, pausing several times on his way under the pretext of saluting his protectors. Several days elapsed and they neither saw nor heard of Cucumetto. The time of the Carnival was at hand. The Comte de San-Felice announced a grand masked ball, to which all that were distinguished in Rome were invited.

"Teresa had a great desire to see this ball. Luigi asked permission of his protector, the steward, that she and he might be present amongst the servants of the house. This was granted.

"The ball was given by the count for the particular pleasure of his daughter Carmela, whom he adored. Carmela was precisely the age and figure of Teresa, and Teresa was as handsome as Carmela. On the evening of the ball Teresa was attired in her best, her most brilliant hair ornaments, and gayest glass beads—she was in the costume of the women of Frascati. Luigi wore the very picturesque garb of the Roman peasant at holiday time. They both mixed, as they had leave to do, with the servants and peasants.

"The *fête* was magnificent; not only was the villa brilliantly illuminated, but thousands of colored lanterns were suspended from the trees in the garden; and very soon the palace overflowed to the terraces, and the terraces to the garden-walks. At each cross-path was an orchestra, and tables spread with refreshments; the guests stopped, formed quadrilles, and danced in every part of the grounds they pleased.

"Carmela was attired like a woman of Sonnino. Her cap was embroidered with pearls, the pins in her hair were of gold and diamonds, her girdle was of Turkey silk, with

large embroidered flowers, her bodice and skirt were of cashmere, her apron of Indian muslin, and the buttons of her corset were of jewels.

"Two of her companions were dressed, the one as a woman of Nettuno, and the other as a woman of La Riccia. Four young men of the richest and noblest families of Rome accompanied them, with that Italian freedom which has not its parallel in any other country in the world. They were attired as peasants of Albano, Velletri, Civita Castellana, and Sora. We need hardly add that these peasant costumes, like those of the females, were brilliant with gold and jewels.

"Carmela wished to make an uniform quadrille, but there was one lady wanting. Carmela looked all around her, but not one of the guests had a costume similar to her own, or those of her companions.

"The Comte de San-Felice pointed out to her in the group of peasants Teresa, who was hanging on Luigi's arm.

"'Will you allow me, father?' said Carmela.

"'Certainly,' replied the comte, 'are we not in Carnival time?'

"Carmela turned towards the young man who was talking with her, and saying a few words to him, pointed with her finger to Teresa. The young man followed with his eyes the lovely hand which made this indication, bowed in obedience, and then went to Teresa, and invited her to dance in a quadrille, directed by the count's daughter. Teresa felt something like a flame pass over her face; she looked at Luigi, who could not refuse his assent. Luigi slowly relinquished Teresa's arm, which he had held beneath his own, and Teresa, accompanied by her elegant cavalier, took her appointed place with much agitation in the aristocratic quadrille.

"Certainly, in the eyes of an artist, the exact and strict costume of Teresa had a very different character from that of Carmela and her companions; and Teresa was frivolous

and coquettish, and thus the embroidery and muslins, the cashmere waist-girdles, all dazzled her, and the reflection of sapphires and diamonds almost turned her giddy brain.

“Luigi felt a sensation hitherto unknown arising in his mind. It was like an acute pain which gnawed at his heart, and then passed thrillingly throughout his frame, chasing through his veins and pervading his entire body. He followed, with his eye, each movement of Teresa and her cavalier; when their hands touched, he felt as though he should swoon; every pulse beat with violence, and it seemed as though a bell was ringing in his ears. When they spoke, although Teresa listened timidly and with downcast eyes to the conversation of her cavalier, as Luigi could read in the ardent looks of the good-looking young man that his language was that of praise, it seemed as if the whole world was turning around with him, and all the voices of hell were whispering in his ears ideas of murder and assassination. Then, fearing that his paroxysm might get the better of him, he clutched with one hand the branch of a tree against which he was leaning, and with the other convulsively grasped the dagger with a carved handle, which was in his belt, and which unwittingly he drew from his scabbard from time to time.

“Luigi was jealous. He felt that, influenced by her ambition and coquettish disposition, Teresa might escape him.

“The young peasant girl, at first timid and scared, soon recovered herself. I have said that Teresa was handsome, but this is not all; Teresa was replete with all those wild graces which are so much more potent than our affected and studied elegancies. She had almost all the honors of the quadrille, and if she were envious of the Comte de San-Felice's daughter, we will not undertake to say that Carmela was not jealous of her. And with overpowering compliments, her handsome cavalier led her back to the place whence he had taken her, and where Luigi awaited her.

"Twice or thrice during the dance the young girl had glanced at Luigi, and each time she saw he was pale and his features agitated; once even the blade of his knife, half drawn from its sheath, had dazzled her eyes with its sinister glare. Thus it was almost trembling that she resumed her lover's arm.

"The quadrille had been most perfect, and it was evident that there was a great demand for a second edition, Carmela alone objecting to it, but the Comte de San-Felice begged his daughter so earnestly that she acceded to it. One of the cavaliers then hastened to invite Teresa, without whom it was impossible the quadrille could be formed, but the young girl had disappeared.

"The truth was, that Luigi had not felt the strength to support another such trial, and half by persuasion and half by force, he had removed Teresa towards another part of the garden. Teresa had yielded in spite of herself, but when she looked at the agitated countenance of the young man, she understood by his silence and trembling voice that something strange was passing within him. She herself was not exempt from internal emotion, and without having done anything wrong, yet fully comprehended that Luigi was right in reproaching her. Why, she did not know; but she did not the less feel that these reproaches were merited. However, to Teresa's great astonishment, Luigi remained mute and not a word escaped his lips the rest of the evening. When the chill of the night had driven away the guests from the gardens, and the gates of the villa were closed on them for the *fête* indoors, he took Teresa quite away, and as he left her at her home, he said:

"'Teresa, what were you thinking of as you danced opposite the young Comtesse de San-Felice?'

"'I thought,' replied the young girl, with all the frankness of her nature, 'that I would give half my life for a costume such as she wore.'

"'And what said your cavalier to you?'

“‘He said it only depended on myself to have it, and I had only one word to say.’

“‘He was right,’ said Luigi. ‘Do you desire it as ardently as you say?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, then, you shall have it!’

“The young girl, much astonished, raised her head to look at him, but his face was so gloomy and terrible that her words froze to her lips.

“As Luigi spoke thus, he left her. Teresa followed him with her eyes into the darkness as long as she could, and when he had quite disappeared, she entered her apartment with a sigh.

“That night a great accident happened, no doubt from the imprudence of some servant who had neglected to extinguish the lights. The Villa de San-Felice took fire in the rooms adjoining the very apartment of the lovely Carmela. Awoke in the night by the light of the flames, she had sprung out of bed, wrapped herself in a dressing-gown, and attempted to escape by the door, but the corridor by which she hoped to fly was already a prey to the flames. She had then returned to her room, calling for help as loudly as she could, when suddenly her window, which was twenty feet from the ground, was opened, a young peasant jumped into the chamber, seized her in his arms, and with superhuman skill and strength conveyed her to the turf of the grass-plot, where she fainted. When she recovered, her father was by her side. All the servants surrounded her, offering her assistance. An entire wing of the villa was burnt down; but what was that, so long as Carmela was safe and uninjured? Her preserver was everywhere sought for, but her deliverer did not appear; he was inquired for everywhere, but no one had seen him. Carmela was greatly troubled that she had not recognized him.

“As the count was immensely rich, excepting the danger Carmela had run, and, as it appeared to him, the marvel-

lous manner in which she had escaped, which was rather a favor of Providence than a real misfortune, the loss occasioned by the conflagration was to him but a trifle.

"The next day, at the usual hour, the two young peasants were on the borders of the forest. He came towards Teresa in high spirits, and seemed to have completely forgotten the events of the previous evening. The young girl was very pensive, but seeing Luigi so cheerful, she, on her part, assumed a smiling air, which was natural to her when no excitement of passion came to disturb her.

"Luigi took her arm beneath his own, and led her to the door of the grotto. Then he paused. The young girl, perceiving that there was something extraordinary, looked at him steadfastly.

"‘Teresa,’ said Luigi, ‘yesterday evening you told me you would give all the world to have a costume similar to that of the count’s daughter.’

"‘Yes,’ replied Teresa, with astonishment; ‘but I was mad to utter such a wish.’

"‘And I replied, “Very well, you shall have it.”’

"‘Yes,’ replied the young girl, whose astonishment increased at every word uttered by Luigi, ‘but of course your reply was only to please me.’

"‘I have promised no more than I have given you, Teresa,’ said Luigi, proudly. ‘Go into the grotto, and dress yourself.’

"At these words he drew away the stone, and showed Teresa the grotto, and lighted up the two wax-lights which burnt on each side of a splendid mirror; on a rustic table made by Luigi were spread out the pearl necklace and the diamond pins, and on a chair at the side was laid the rest of the costume.

"Teresa uttered a cry of joy, and, without inquiring whence this attire came, or even thanking Luigi, darted into the grotto transformed into a dressing-room.

"Luigi pushed the stone behind her, for he saw on the

crest of a small adjacent hill, which prevented him from seeing Palestrina from where he was, a traveller on horseback, who stopped a moment, as if uncertain of his road, and thus presented, in the blue sky, that perfect outline peculiar to the distances of southern climes.

“When he saw Luigi he put his horse into a gallop and advanced towards him. Luigi was not mistaken. The traveller, who was going from Palestrina to Tivoli, had mistaken his way: the young man directed him; but as, at a quarter of a mile distance, the road again divided into three ways, and on reaching these the traveller might again stray from his route, he begged Luigi to be his guide. Luigi threw his cloak on the ground, placed his carbine on his shoulder, and freed from his heavy covering, preceded the traveller with the rapid step of a mountaineer, which a horse can scarcely keep up with. In ten minutes Luigi and the traveller reached the cross-roads alluded to by the young shepherd. On arriving there, with an air as majestic as that of an emperor, he stretched his hand towards that one of the roads which the traveller was to follow.

“‘That is your road, excellency, and now you cannot again mistake.’

“‘And here is your recompense,’ said the traveller, offering the young herdsman some pieces of small money.

“‘Thank you,’ said Luigi, drawing back his head; ‘I render a service, I do not sell it.’

“‘Well,’ replied the traveller, who seemed used to this difference between the servility of a man of the cities and the pride of the mountaineer, ‘if you refuse pay, you will, perhaps, accept of a present.’

“‘Ah, yes, that is another thing.’

“‘Then,’ said the traveller, ‘take these two Venice sequins and give them to your bride, to make herself a pair of earrings.’

“‘And then do you take this poniard,’ said the young

herdsman; 'you will not find one better carved between Albano and Civita Castellana.'

"'I accept it,' answered the traveller, 'but then the obligation will be on my side, for this poniard is worth more than two sequins.'

"'For a dealer, perhaps; but for me, who engraved it myself, it is hardly worth a piastre.'

"'What is your name?' inquired the traveller.

"'Luigi Vampa,' replied the shepherd, with the same air as he would have replied, Alexander, king of Macedon.

"'And yours?'

"'I,' said the traveller, 'am called Sinbad the Sailor.'

Franz d'Epinay started with surprise.

"Sinbad the Sailor?" he said.

"Yes," replied the narrator, "that was the name which the traveller gave to Vampa as his own."

"Well, and what have you to say against this name?" inquired Albert; "it is a very pretty name, and the adventures of the gentleman of that name amused me very much in my youth, I must confess."

Franz said no more. The name of Sinbad the Sailor, as may be well supposed, awakened in him a world of recollections, as had the name of the Count of Monte-Cristo on the previous evening.

"Proceed!" said he to the host.

"Vampa put the two sequins haughtily into his pocket, and slowly returned by the way he had gone. As he came within two or three hundred paces of the grotto he thought he heard a cry. He listened to know whence this sound could proceed. A moment afterwards and he heard his own name pronounced distinctly. The cry proceeded from the grotto. He bounded like a chamois, cocking his carbine as he went, and in a moment reached the summit of a hill opposite to that on which he perceived the traveller. Thence cries of help came more distinctly on his ear. He cast his eyes around him, and saw a man carrying off Teresa, as did the Centaur Nessus, Dejanira. This man,

who was hastening towards the wood, was already three quarters of the way on the road from the grotto to the forest. Vampa measured the distance; the man was at least two hundred paces in advance of him, and there was not a chance of overtaking him. The young shepherd stopped, as if his feet had been rooted to the ground; then he put the butt of his carbine to his shoulder, took aim at the ravisher, followed him for a second in his track, and then fired. The ravisher stopped suddenly, his knees bent under him, and he fell with Teresa in his arms. The young girl rose instantly, but the man lay on the earth struggling in the agonies of death. Vampa then rushed towards Teresa; for at ten paces from the dying man, her legs had failed her, and she had dropped on her knees, so that the young man feared the ball that had brought down his enemy had also wounded his betrothed. Fortunately, she was unscathed, and it was fright alone that had overcome Teresa. When Luigi had assured himself that she was safe and unharmed, he turned towards the wounded man. He had just expired, with clenched hands, his mouth in a spasm of agony, and his hair on end in the sweat of death. His eyes remained open and menacing. Vampa approached the carcass and recognized Cucumetto. From the day on which the bandit had been saved by the two young peasants, he had been enamored of Teresa, and had sworn she should be his. From that time he had watched them, and profiting by the moment when her lover had left her alone, whilst he guided the traveller on his way, had carried her off, and believed he at length had her in his power, when the ball, directed by the unerring skill of the young herdsman, had pierced his heart. Vampa gazed on him for a moment without betraying the slightest emotion; whilst, on the contrary, Teresa, shuddering in every limb, dared not approach the slain ruffian but by degrees, and threw a hesitating glance at the dead body over the shoulder of her lover. Suddenly Vampa turned towards his mistress.

“‘Ah, ah!’ said he; ‘good, good! you are attired; it is now my turn to dress myself.’

“Teresa was clothed from head to foot in the garb of the Comte de San-Felice’s daughter. Vampa took Cucumetto’s body in his arms and conveyed it to the grotto, whilst in her turn Teresa remained outside. If a second traveller had passed, he would have seen a strange thing: a shepherdess watching her flock, clad in a cashmere gown, with earrings and necklace of pearls, diamond pins, and buttons of sapphires, emeralds, and rubies. He would, no doubt, have believed that he had returned to the times of Florian, and would have declared, on reaching Paris, that he had met a shepherdess of the Alps seated at the foot of the Sabine Hill. At the end of a quarter of an hour Vampa quitted the grotto; his costume was no less elegant than that of Teresa. He wore a vest of garnet-colored velvet, with buttons of cut gold; a silk waistcoat covered with embroidery; a Roman scarf tied around his neck; a cartouche-box worked with gold, and red and green silk; sky-blue velvet breeches, fastened above the knee with diamond buckles; garters of deer-skin, worked with a thousand arabesques, and a hat whereupon hung ribands of all colors; two watches hung from his girdle, and a splendid poniard was in his belt. Teresa uttered a cry of admiration. Vampa in this attire resembled a painting by Leopold Robert or Schnetz. He had assumed the entire costume of Cucumetto. The young man saw the effect produced on his betrothed, and a smile of pride passed over his lips.

“‘Now,’ he said to Teresa, ‘are you ready to share my fortune, whatever it may be?’

“‘Oh, yes!’ exclaimed the young girl, enthusiastically.

“‘And follow me wherever I go?’

“‘To the world’s end.’

“‘Then take my arm, and let us on; we have no time to lose.’

“The young girl did so, without questioning her lover

as to where he was conducting her, for he appeared to her at this moment as handsome, proud, and powerful as a god. They went towards the forest, and soon entered it. We need scarcely say that all the paths of the mountain were known to Vampa; he therefore went forward without a moment's hesitation, although there was no beaten track; but he knew his path by looking at the trees and bushes; and thus they kept on advancing for nearly an hour and a half. At the end of this time they had reached the thickest of the forest. A torrent, whose bed was dry, led into a deep gorge. Vampa took this wild road, which, enclosed between two ridges, and shadowed by the tufted umbrage of the pines, seemed, but for the difficulties of its descent, that path to Avernus of which Virgil speaks. Teresa had become alarmed at the wild and deserted look of the plain around her, and pressed closely against her guide, not uttering a syllable; but as she saw him advance with even step and composed countenance, she endeavored to repress her emotion. Suddenly, about ten paces from them, a man advanced from behind a tree and aimed at Vampa.

“‘Not another step,’ he said, ‘or you are a dead man.’

“‘What, then?’ said Vampa, raising his hand, with a gesture of disdain, whilst Teresa, no longer able to restrain her alarm, clung closely to him; ‘do wolves rend each other?’

“‘Who are you?’ inquired the sentinel.

“‘I am Luigi Vampa, shepherd of the farm of San-Felice.’

“‘What do you want?’

“‘I would speak with your companions, who are in the recess at Rocca Bianca.’

“‘Follow me, then,’ said the sentinel; ‘or as you know your way, go first.’

“Vampa smiled disdainfully at this precaution of the bandit, went before Teresa, and continued to advance with the same firm and easy step as before. At the end of ten

minutes the bandit made them a sign to stop. The two young persons obeyed. Then the bandit thrice imitated the cry of a crow; a croak answered this signal.

“‘Good!’ said the sentry; ‘you may now advance.’

“Luigi and Teresa again set forward: as they advanced, Teresa clung tremblingly to her lover, as she saw through the trees arms appear and the barrels of carbines shine. The retreat of Rocca Bianca was at the top of a small mountain, which no doubt in former days had been a volcano—an extinct volcano before the days when Remus and Romulus had deserted Alba to come and found the city of Rome. Teresa and Luigi reached the summit, and all at once found themselves in the presence of twenty bandits.

“‘Here is a young man who seeks and wishes to speak to you,’ said the sentinel.

“‘What has he to say?’ inquired the man who was in command in the chief’s absence.

“‘I wish to say that I am tired of a shepherd’s life,’ was Vampa’s reply.

“‘Ah, I understand,’ said the lieutenant; ‘and you seek admittance into our ranks?’

“‘Welcome!’ cried several bandits of Ferrusino, Pampinara, and Anagni, who recognized Luigi Vampa.

“‘Yes, but I come to ask something more than to be your companion.’

“‘And what may that be?’ inquired the bandits, with astonishment.

“‘I come to ask to be your captain,’ said the young man.

“The bandits shouted with laughter.

“‘And what have you done to aspire to this honor?’ demanded the lieutenant.

“‘I have killed your chief, Cucumetto, whose dress I now wear; and I set fire to the Villa San-Felice to procure a wedding-dress for my betrothed.’

“An hour afterwards Luigi Vampa was chosen captain, *vice* Cucumetto deceased.”

"Well, my dear Albert," said Franz, turning towards his friend, "what think you of citizen Luigi Vampa?"

"I say he is a myth," replied Albert, "and never had an existence."

"And what may a myth be?" inquired Pastrini.

"The explanation would be too long, my dear landlord," replied Franz.

"And you say that Maître Vampa exercises his profession at this moment in the environs of Rome?"

"And with a boldness of which no bandit before him ever gave an example."

"Then the police have vainly tried to lay hands on him?"

"Why, you see, he has a good understanding with the shepherds in the plains, the fishermen of the Tiber, and the smugglers of the coast. They seek for him in the mountains, and he is on the waters; they follow him on the waters, and he is on the open sea; then they pursue him, and he has suddenly taken refuge in the Isle of Giglio, or Guanouti, or Monte-Cristo, and when they hunt for him there, he reappears suddenly at Albano, Tivoli, or La Riccia."

"And how does he behave towards travellers?"

"Alas! his plan is very simple. It depends on the distance he may be from the city, whether he gives eight hours, twelve hours, or a day wherein to pay their ransom; and when that time has elapsed he allows another hour's grace. At the sixtieth minute of this hour, if the money is not forthcoming, he blows out the prisoner's brains with a pistol-shot, or plants his dagger in his heart, and that settles the account."

"Well, Albert," inquired Franz, of his companion, "are you still disposed to go on to the Colosseum by the outer Boulevards?"

"Perfectly," said Albert, "if the way be picturesque."

The clock struck nine as the door opened and a coachman appeared.

"Excellencies," said he, "the coach is ready."

"Well, then," said Franz, "let us to the Colosseum."

"By the Porto del Popolo, or by the streets, your excellencies?"

"By the streets, *morbleu!* by the streets," cried Franz.

"Ah, my dear fellow!" said Albert, rising and lighting his third cigar; "really, I thought you had more courage."

So saying, the two young men went down the staircase and got into the carriage.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE COLOSSEUM.

FRANZ had so managed his route, that during the ride to the Colosseum they passed not a single ancient ruin, so that no gradual preparation was made on the mind for the colossal proportions of the gigantic building they came to admire. The road selected was a continuation of the Via Sistina; then, by cutting off the right angle of the street in which stands Sainte Marie Majeure, and proceeding by the Via Urbana and San Pietro in Vincoli, the travellers would find themselves directly opposite the Colosseum. This itinerary possessed another great advantage, that of leaving Franz at full liberty to indulge his deep reverie upon the subject of the story recounted by Maître Pastrini, in which his mysterious host of the Isle of Monte-Cristo was so strangely mixed up. Seated with folded arms in a corner of the carriage, he continued to ponder over the singular history he had so lately listened to, and to ask himself an interminable number of questions touching its various circumstances, without arriving at a satisfactory reply to any of them. One fact more than the rest brought his friend "Sinbad the Sailor" back to his recollection, and that was the mysterious sort of intimacy that seemed to exist between the brigands and sailors; and Pastrini's account of Vampa's having found refuge on board the vessels of smugglers and fishermen, reminded Franz of the two Corsican bandits he had found supping so amicably with the crew of the little yacht which had even deviated from its course and touched at Porto-Vecchio for the sole purpose of landing them. The very name

assumed by his host of Monte-Cristo, and again repeated by the landlord of the Hôtel de Londres, abundantly proved to him that his island friend was playing his philanthropic part equally on the shores of Piombino, Civita Vecchia, Ostia, and Gaeta, as on those of Corsica, Tuscany, and Spain; and further, Franz bethought him of having heard his singular entertainer speak both of Tunis and Palermo, proving thereby how largely his circle of acquaintances extended.

But however the mind of the young man might be absorbed in these reflections, they were at once dispersed at the sight of the dark, frowning ruins of the stupendous Colosseum, through the openings of which the pale moonlight played and flickered like the unearthly gleam from the eyes of the wandering dead. The carriage stopped near Meta Sudans, the door was opened, and the young men, eagerly alighting, found themselves opposite a cicerone, who appeared to have sprung up from the ground, so unexpected was his appearance.

The usual guide from the hotel having followed them, they had paid two conductors; nor is it possible at Rome to avoid this abundant supply of guides; besides the ordinary cicerone who seizes upon you directly you set foot in your hotel, and never quits you while you remain in the city, there is also a special cicerone belonging to each monument — nay, almost to each part of a monument. It may, therefore, be easily imagined there is no scarcity of guides at the Colosseum, that wonder of all ages, which Martial thus eulogizes: "Let Memphis cease to boast the barbarous miracles of her pyramids, nor the wonders of Babylon be talked of amongst us; all must bow to the superiority of the gigantic labor of the Cæsars, and the many voices of Fame spread far and wide the surpassing merits of this incomparable monument."

As for Albert and Franz, they essayed not to escape from their ciceronian tyrants. And, indeed, it would have been so much the more difficult to break their bondage, as

the guides alone are permitted to visit these monuments with torches in their hands; thus, then, the young men made no attempt at resistance, but blindly and confidently surrendered themselves into the care and custody of their conductors. Franz had already made seven or eight similar excursions to the Colosseum, while his less favored companion trod for the first time in his life the classic ground forming the monument of Flavius Vespasian, and, to his credit be it spoken, his mind, even amid the glib loquacity of the guides, was duly and deeply touched with awe and enthusiastic admiration of all he saw — and certainly no adequate notion of these stupendous ruins can be formed save by such as have visited them, and more especially by moonlight; at which time the vast proportions of the building appear twice as large when viewed by the mysterious beams of a southern moonlit sky, whose rays are sufficiently clear and vivid to gild the horizon with a glow equal to the soft twilight of an eastern clime. Scarcely, therefore, had the reflective Franz walked a hundred steps beneath the interior porticoes of the ruin, than, abandoning Albert to the guides, who would by no means yield their prescriptive right of carrying their victims through the routine regularly laid down, and as regularly followed by them, but dragged the unconscious visitor to the various objects with a pertinacity that admitted of no appeal, beginning, as a matter of course, with the “Fosse des Lions,” and finishing with the “Podium des Cæsars,” to escape a jargon and mechanical survey of the wonders by which he was surrounded, Franz descended a half-dilapidated staircase, and leaving them to follow their monotonous round, seated himself at the foot of a column, and immediately opposite a large chasm, which permitted him to enjoy a full and undisturbed view of the gigantic dimensions of this majestic ruin.

Franz had remained for nearly a quarter of an hour perfectly hidden by the shadow of the vast column at whose base he had found a resting-place, and whence his eyes

followed the motions of Albert and his guides, who, holding torches in their hands, had emerged from a vomitorium placed at the opposite extremity of the Colosseum, and then again disappeared down the steps conducting to the seats reserved for the Vestal virgins, resembling, as they glided along, some restless shades following the flickering glare of so many *ignes fatui*, when all at once his ear caught a sound resembling that of a stone rolling down the staircase opposite the one by which he himself had ascended; there was nothing remarkable in the circumstance of a morsel of granite giving way and falling heavily below; but it seemed to him that the substance that fell gave way beneath the pressure of a foot; and also that some one, who endeavored as much as possible to prevent his footsteps from being heard, was approaching the spot where he sat. Conjecture soon became certainty, for the figure of a man was distinctly visible to Franz, gradually emerging from the staircase opposite, upon which the moon was at that moment pouring a full tide of silvery brightness.

The stranger thus presenting himself was probably a person who, like Franz, preferred the enjoyment of solitude and his own thoughts to the frivolous gabble of the guides; and his appearance had nothing extraordinary in it; but the hesitation with which he proceeded onwards, stopping and listening with anxious attention at every step he took, convinced Franz he expected the arrival of some person. By a sort of instinctive impulse, Franz withdrew as much as possible behind the pillar. About ten feet from the spot where himself and the stranger were placed, the roof had given way, leaving a large round aperture, through which might be seen the blue vault of heaven thickly studded with stars. Around this opening, which had, possibly for ages, permitted a free entrance to the brilliant moonbeams that now illumined the vast pile, grew a quantity of creeping plants, whose delicate green branches stood out in bold relief against the

clear azure of the firmament, while large masses of thick, strong, fibrous roots forced their way through the chasm and hung floating to and fro like so many waving strings.

The person whose mysterious arrival had attracted the attention of Franz stood in a kind of half-light, and rendered it impossible to distinguish his features, although his dress was easily made out; he wore a large brown mantle, one fold of which, thrown over his left shoulder, served likewise to mask the lower part of his countenance, while the upper part was completely hidden by his broad-brimmed hat; the lower part of his dress was more distinctly visible by the bright rays of the moon, which, entering through the broken ceiling, shed their refulgent beams on feet cased in elegantly made boots of polished leather, over which descended fashionably cut trousers of black cloth.

From the imperfect means Franz had of judging, he could only come to one conclusion—that the individual whom he was thus watching certainly belonged to no inferior station of life. Some few minutes had elapsed and the stranger began to show manifest signs of impatience, when a slight noise was heard outside the aperture in the roof, and almost immediately a dark shadow seemed to obstruct the flood of light that had entered from it, and the figure of a man was clearly seen gazing with eager scrutiny on the immense space beneath him; then, as his eyes caught sight of the individual in the mantle, he grasped a floating mass of thickly matted boughs, and glided down by their help to within three or four feet of the ground, and then leaped lightly on his feet; the man who had performed this daring act with so much indifference wore the costume of Transtevere.

“I beg your excellency’s pardon for keeping you waiting,” said the man, in the Roman dialect, “but I don’t think I am many minutes after my time; ten o’clock has just struck by the clock of Saint-Jean-de-Latran.”

“Say not a word about being late,” replied the stranger

in purest Tuscany, "'tis I who am too soon; but even if you had caused me to wait a little while, I should have felt quite sure that the delay was not occasioned by any fault of yours."

"Your excellency is perfectly right in so thinking," said the man: "I came here direct from the Château Saint-Ange, and I had an immense deal of trouble before I could get to speak to Beppo."

"And who is Beppo?"

"Oh! Beppo is employed in the prison, and I give him so much a year to let me know what is going on within his holiness's château."

"Indeed! you are a provident person."

"Why, you see, no one knows what may happen; perhaps some of these days I may be entrapped like poor Peppino, and may be very glad to have some little nibbling mouse to gnaw the meshes of my net, and so help me out of prison."

"Briefly, what news did you glean?"

"That two executions of considerable interest would take place the day after to-morrow at two o'clock, as is customary at Rome at the commencement of all great festivals; one of the culprits will be *mazzolato*; he is an atrocious villain, who murdered the priest who brought him up, and deserves not the smallest pity; the other sufferer is sentenced to be *decapitato*, and he, your excellency, is poor Peppino."

"The fact is that you have inspired, not only the pontifical government, but also the neighboring states, with such extreme fear, that they are glad of an opportunity of making an example."

"But Peppino did not even belong to my band; he was merely a poor shepherd, whose only crime consisted in furnishing us with provisions."

"Which makes him your accomplice to all intents and purposes; but mark the distinction with which he is treated: instead of being knocked on the head, as you

would be if once they caught hold of you, he is simply sentenced to be guillotined, by which means, too, the amusements of the day are diversified, and there is a spectacle to please every spectator."

"Without reckoning the wholly unexpected one I am prepared to surprise them with."

"My good friend," said the man in the cloak, "excuse me for saying that you seem to me precisely in the mood to commit some wild or extravagant act."

"Perhaps I am; but one thing I have resolved on, and that is, to stop at nothing to restore a poor devil to liberty, who has got into this scrape solely from having served me; I should hate and despise myself as a coward, did I desert the brave fellow in his present extremity."

"And what do you mean to do?"

"To surround the scaffold with twenty of my best men, who, at a signal from me, will rush forward directly Peppino is brought out for execution, and by the assistance of their stiletos drive back the guard and carry off the prisoner."

"That seems to me as hazardous as uncertain, and convinces me my scheme is far better than yours."

"And what is your excellency's project?"

"Just this: I will so advantageously bestow 2,000 piastres, that the person receiving them shall obtain a respite till next year for Peppino; and during that year another skilfully placed 1,000 piastres shall afford him the means of escaping from his prison."

"And do you feel sure of succeeding?"

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed the man in the cloak, suddenly expressing himself in French.

"What did your excellency say?" inquired the other.

"I said, my good fellow, that I would do more single-handed by the means of gold than you and all your troop could effect with stiletos, pistols, carbines, and blunderbusses included; leave me, then, to act, and have no fears for the result."

"At least there can be no harm in myself and party being in readiness, in case your excellency should fail."

"None whatever; take what precaution you please, if it is any satisfaction for you to do so; but rely upon my obtaining the reprieve I seek."

"Remember the execution is fixed for the day after to-morrow, and that you have but one day to work in."

"And what then? Is not a day divided into twenty-four hours, each hour into sixty minutes, and every minute subdivided into sixty seconds? Now, in 86,400 seconds very many things can be done."

"And how shall I know whether your excellency has succeeded or not?"

"Oh! that is very easily arranged. I have engaged the three lower windows at the Café Rospoli; should I have obtained the requisite pardon for Peppino, the two outside windows will be hung with yellow damask, and the centre with white, having a large cross in red marked on it."

"And whom will you employ to carry the reprieve to the officer directing the execution?"

"Send one of your men disguised as a penitent friar, and I will give it to him; his dress will procure him the means of approaching the scaffold itself; he will deliver the official order to the officer, who in his turn will hand it to the executioner; in the meantime it will be as well to acquaint Peppino with what we have determined on, if it be only to prevent his dying of fear or losing his senses, because in either case a very useless expense will have been incurred."

"Your excellency," said the man, "you are fully persuaded of my entire devotion to you, are you not?"

"Nay, I flatter myself that there can be no doubt of it," replied the cavalier in the cloak.

"Well, then, only fulfil your promise of rescuing Peppino, and henceforward you shall receive not only devotedness, but the most absolute obedience from myself and those under me that one human being can render to another."

"Have a care how far you pledge yourself, my good friend, for I may remind you of your promises at some perhaps not very distant period, when I, in my turn, may require your aid and influence."

"Let that day come sooner or later, your excellency will find me what I have found you in this my heavy trouble; and if from the other end of the world you but write me word to do such or such a thing, conclude it done, for done it shall be on the word and faith of ——"

"Hush!" interrupted the stranger. "I hear a noise."

"'Tis some travellers, who are visiting the Colosseum by torchlight."

"'Twere better we should not be seen together; those guides are nothing but spies, and might possibly recognize you; and, however I may be honored by your friendship, my worthy friend, if once the extent of our intimacy were known, I am sadly afraid both my reputation and credit would suffer thereby."

"Well, then, if you obtain the reprieve?"

"The middle window of the Café Rospoli will be hung with white damask, bearing on it a red cross."

"And if you fail?"

"Then, all three windows will have yellow draperies."

"And then?"

"And then, my good fellow, use your daggers in any way you please; and I further promise you to be there as a spectator of your prowess."

"All is then understood between us. Adieu, your excellency; depend upon me as firmly as I do upon you."

Saying these words, the Transtevere disappeared down the staircase, while his companion, muffling his features more closely than before in the folds of his mantle, passed almost close to Franz and descended to the arena by an outward flight of steps. The next minute Franz heard himself called by Albert, who made the lofty building re-echo with the sound of his friend's name. Franz, however, did not obey the summons till he had satisfied himself the

two individuals, whose conversation he had thus surprised, were at a sufficient distance to prevent his encountering them in his descent, not wishing that they should suspect having had a witness to their discourse, who, if unable to recognize their faces, had at least heard every word that passed. In ten minutes from the parting of the strangers, Franz was on the road to the Hôtel d'Espagne, listening with mortifying indifference to the learned dissertation, by Albert, after the manner of Pliny and Calpurnius, touching the iron-pointed nets used to prevent the ferocious beasts from springing on the spectator. Franz let him proceed without interruption; in fact, he heard not what he said; he longed to be alone, and able undisturbedly to ponder over all that had occurred.

One of the two men, whose mysterious rendezvous in the Colosseum he had so unintentionally witnessed, was an entire stranger to him, but not so the other; and though Franz had been unable to distinguish his features, from his being either wrapped in his mantle or obscured by the shadow, the tones of his voice had made too powerful an impression on him the first time he heard them for him ever again to forget them, hear them when or where he might. It was more especially when speaking in a manner half jesting, half bitter, that Franz's ear recalled most vividly the deep, sonorous, yet well-pitched voice that had spoken to him in the grotto of Monte-Cristo, and which he heard for the second time amid the darkness and ruined grandeur of the Colosseum! And the more he thought, the more entire was his conviction, that the individual in the mantle was no other than the former host and entertainer, "Sinbad the Sailor."

Under any other circumstances Franz would have found it impossible to resist his extreme curiosity to know more of so singular a personage, and with that intent have sought to renew their short acquaintance: but in the present instance, the confidential nature of the conversation he had overheard made him, with propriety, judge that

his appearance at such a time would be anything but agreeable. As we have seen, therefore, he permitted his former host to retire without attempting a recognition; but fully promising himself a rich indemnity for his present forbearance should chance afford him another opportunity.

In vain did Franz endeavor to forget the many perplexing thoughts which assailed him; in vain did he court the refreshment of sleep. Slumber refused to visit his eyelids, and his night was passed in feverish contemplation of the chain of circumstances tending to prove the individuality of the mysterious visitant to the Colosseum and the inhabitant of the grotto of Monte-Cristo; and the more he thought, the firmer grew his opinion on the subject. Worn out, at length, he fell asleep at daybreak, and did not awake till late. Like a genuine Frenchman, Albert had employed his time in arranging for the evening's diversion; he had sent to engage a box at the Teatro Argentino; and Franz, having a number of letters to write, relinquished the carriage to Albert the whole day.

At five o'clock Albert returned delighted with his day's work; he had been occupied in leaving his letters of introduction, and had received in return more invitations to soirées than it would be possible for him to fulfil; besides this, he had seen (as he called it) all the remarkable sights at Rome. Yes, in a single day he had accomplished what his more reflective companion would have taken a week to effect. Neither had he neglected to ascertain the name of the piece to be played that night at the Teatro Argentino, and also what performers appeared in it.

The opera of *Parisina* was announced for representation, and the principal actors were Coselli, Moriani, and La Spech. The young men, therefore, had reason to consider themselves fortunate in having the opportunity of hearing one of the best works by the composer of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, supported by three of the most renowned vocalists of Italy. Albert had never been able to endure the

Italian theatres, with their orchestras from which it is impossible to see, and the absence of balconies or opera-boxes; all these defects pressed hard on a man who had his stall at the opera bouffe and his share in the omnibus box at the Italian opera. Still, in despite of this, Albert displayed his most dazzling and effective costume each time he visited the theatres; but alas! his *recherché* toilet was wholly thrown away; and one of the most worthy representatives of Parisian fashion had to carry with him the mortifying reflection of having nearly overrun Italy without meeting with a single adventure.

Sometimes Albert would affect to make a joke of his want of success, but internally he was deeply wounded, and his self-love immensely piqued to think that Albert de Morcerf, the most admired and most sought after of any young person of his day, should thus be passed over, and merely have his labor for his pains. And the thing was so much the more annoying, as, according to the characteristic modesty of a Frenchman, Albert had quitted Paris with the full conviction that he had only to show himself in Italy to carry all before him, and that upon his return he should astonish the Parisian world with the recital of his numerous love-affairs.

Alas! poor Albert, none of those interesting adventures fell in his way: the lovely Genoese, Florentine, and Neapolitan females were all faithful, if not to their husbands, at least to their lovers, and thought not of changing even for the splendid appearance of Albert de Morcerf; and all he gained was the painful conviction that the ladies of Italy have this advantage over those of France, that they are faithful even to their infidelity. Yet he could not restrain a hope that in Italy, as elsewhere, there might be an exception to the general rule. Albert, besides being an elegant, well-looking young man, was also possessed of considerable talent and ability; moreover, he was a viscount, a recently created one, certainly, but in the present day it is not necessary to go as far back as Noah in tracing

a descent, and a genealogical tree is equally estimated whether dated from 1399 or merely 1815; but to crown all these advantages, Albert de Morcerf commanded an income of 500,000 livres, a more than sufficient sum to render him a personage of considerable importance in Paris. It was, therefore, no small mortification to him to have visited most of the principal cities in Italy without having excited the most trifling observation. Albert, however, hoped to indemnify himself for all these slights and indifferences during the Carnival, knowing full well that among the different states and kingdoms in which this festivity is celebrated, Rome is the spot where even the wisest and gravest throw off the usual rigidity of their lives, and deign to mingle in the follies of this time of liberty and relaxation.

The Carnival was to commence on the morrow; therefore Albert had not an instant to lose in setting forth the programme of his hopes, expectations, and claims to notice. With this design, he had engaged a box in the most conspicuous part of the theatre, and exerted himself to set off his personal attractions by the aid of the most *recherché* and elaborate toilet. The box taken by Albert was in the first circle; although each of the three tiers of the boxes is deemed equally aristocratic, and are, for this reason, generally styled the "nobility's boxes," and although the box engaged for the two friends was sufficiently capacious to contain at least a dozen persons, it had cost less than would be paid at some of the French theatres for one admitting merely four occupants.

Another motive had influenced Albert's selection of his seat—being thus advantageously placed, he thought he could not fail to attract the notice of some fair Roman; and an introduction might ensue that would procure him the offer of a seat in a carriage or a place in a princely balcony, from which he might behold the gayeties of the Carnival.

These united considerations made Albert more lively

and anxious to please than he had hitherto been. Totally disregarding the business of the stage, he leaned from his box and began attentively scrutinizing the beauty of each pretty woman, aided by a powerful lorgnette; but alas! this attempt to attract similar notice wholly failed; not even curiosity had been excited; and it was too apparent that the lovely creatures into whose good graces he was desirous of stealing were all so much engrossed with themselves, their lovers, or their own thoughts, that they had not so much as remarked him or the pointing of his glass.

The truth was, that the anticipated pleasures of the Carnival, with the "holy week" that was to succeed it, so filled every fair breast, as to prevent the least attention being bestowed even on the business of the stage; the actors made their entries and exits unobserved or unthought of; at certain conventional moments the spectators would suddenly cease their conversation, or rouse themselves from their musings to listen to some brilliant effort of Moriani's, a well-executed recitative by Coselli, or to join in loud applause at the wonderful powers of La Spech; but that momentary excitement over, they quickly relapsed into their former state of preoccupation or interesting conversation. Towards the close of the first act, the door of a box which had hitherto been vacant was opened: a lady entered to whom Franz had been introduced in Paris, where, indeed, he had imagined she still was. The quick eye of Albert caught the involuntary start with which his friend beheld the new arrival, and turning to him, he said hastily;

"Do you know the female who has just entered the box?"

"Yes, what do you think of her?"

"Oh, she is perfectly lovely — what a complexion! And such magnificent hair! Is she French?"

"No, a Venetian."

"And her name is ——"

"Countess G——"

"Ah! I know her by name," exclaimed Albert; "she is said to possess as much wit and cleverness as beauty. I was to have been presented to her when I met her at Madame Villefort's ball."

"Shall I assist you in repairing your negligence?" asked Franz.

"My dear fellow, are you really on such good terms with her as to venture to take me to her box?"

"Why, I have only had the honor of being in her society and conversing with her three or four times in my life; but you know that even such an acquaintance as that might warrant my doing what you ask."

At this instant, the countess perceived Franz, and graciously waved her hand to him, to which he replied by a respectful inclination of the head.

"Upon my word," said Albert, "you seem to be on excellent terms with the beautiful countess!"

"You are mistaken in thinking so," returned Franz, calmly, "but you merely fall into the same error which leads so many of our countrymen to commit the most egregious blunders: I mean that of judging the habits and customs of Italy and Spain by our Parisian notions; believe me, nothing is more fallacious than to form any estimate of the degree of intimacy you may suppose existing among persons by the familiar terms they seem upon; there is a similarity of feeling at this instant between ourselves and the countess — nothing more."

"Is there, indeed, my good fellow? pray tell me, is it sympathy of heart?"

"No, of taste!" continued Franz, gravely.

"And in what manner has this congeniality of mind been evinced?"

"By the countess's visiting the Colosseum, as we did last night, by moonlight, and nearly alone."

"You were with her then?"

"I was."

"And what did you say to her?"

"Oh, we talked mutually of the illustrious dead of whom that magnificent ruin is a glorious monument!"

"Upon my word," cried Albert, "you must have been a very entertaining companion — alone, or all but alone, with a beautiful woman in such a place of sentiment as the Colosseum, and yet to find nothing better to talk about than the dead! All I can say is, if I should ever get such a chance, the living should be my theme."

"And you will probably find your theme ill-chosen."

"But," said Albert, breaking in upon his discourse, "never mind the past, let us only remember the present! Are you not going to keep your promise of introducing me to the fair subject of our remarks?"

"Certainly, directly the curtain falls on the stage!"

"What a confounded time this first act is about! I believe, on my soul, that they never mean to finish it!"

"Oh, yes! they will! only listen to that charming finale! How exquisitely Coselli sings his part!"

"But what an awkward, inelegant fellow he is!"

"Well, then, what do you say to La Spech? Did you ever see anything more perfect than her acting?"

"Why, you know, my dear fellow, when one has been accustomed to Malibran and Sontag, these kind of singers don't make the same impression on you they perhaps do on others."

"At least, you must admire Moriani's style and execution."

"I never fancied men of his dark, ponderous appearance singing with a voice like a woman's."

"My good friend," said Franz, turning to him, while Albert continued to point his glass at every box in the theatre, "you seem determined not to approve; you are really too difficult to please."

The curtain at length fell on the performance, to the infinite satisfaction of the Viscount de Morcerf, who seized his hat, rapidly passed his fingers through his hair, ar-

ranged his cravat and wristbands, and signified to Franz that he was waiting for him to lead the way.

Franz, who had mutely interrogated the countess, and received from her a gracious smile in token that he would be welcome, sought not to retard the gratification of Albert's eager impatience, but commenced at once the tour of the house, closely followed by Albert, who availed himself of the few minutes it occupied to reach the opposite side of the theatre to settle the height and smoothness of his collar, and to arrange the lapels of his coat; this important task was just completed as they arrived at the countess's box; at the knock the door was immediately opened, and the young man, who was seated beside the countess in the front of the *loge*, in obedience to the Italian custom, instantly rose and surrendered his place to the strangers, who, in turn, would be expected to retire upon the arrival of other visitors.

Franz presented Albert as one of the most distinguished young men of the day, both as regarded his position in society and extraordinary talents; nor did he say more than the truth, for in Paris, and the circle in which the viscount moved, he was looked upon and cited as a model of perfection. Franz added that his companion, deeply grieved at having been prevented the honor of being presented to the countess during her sojourn in Paris, was most anxious to make up for it, and had requested him (Franz) to remedy the past misfortune by conducting him to her box, and concluded by asking pardon for his presumption in having taken upon himself to do so. The countess in reply bowed gracefully to Albert, and extended her hand with cordial kindness to Franz; then, inviting Albert to take the vacant seat beside her, she recommended Franz to take the next best, if he wished to view the next ballet, and pointed to the one behind her own chair. Albert was soon deeply engrossed in discoursing upon Paris and Paris matters, speaking to the countess of the various persons they both knew there. Franz perceived how com-

pletely he was in his element: and, unwilling to interfere with the pleasure he so evidently felt, took up Albert's enormous lorgnette, and began in his turn to survey the audience. Sitting alone, in the front of a box immediately opposite, but situated on the third row, was a female of exquisite beauty, dressed in a Greek costume, which it was evident, from the ease and grace with which she wore it, was her national attire. Behind her, but in deep shadow, was the outline of a male figure; but the features of this latter personage it was not possible to distinguish. Franz could not forbear breaking in upon the apparently interesting conversation passing between the countess and Albert to inquire of the former if she knew who was the fair Albanaise opposite, since beauty, such as hers, was well worthy of being remarked by either sex.

"All I can tell you about her," replied the countess, "is that she has been at Rome since the beginning of the season; for I saw her where she now sits the very first night of the theatre's opening, and since then she has never missed a performance. Sometimes accompanied by the individual who is with her, and at others merely attended by a black servant."

"And what do you think of her personal appearance?"

"Oh, I consider her perfectly lovely — she is just my idea of what Medora must have been."

Franz and the countess exchanged a smile, and then the latter resumed her conversation with Albert, while Franz returned to his previous survey of the house and company. The curtain rose on the ballet, which was one of those excellent specimens of the Italian school, admirably arranged and put on the stage by Henri, who has established for himself a great reputation throughout Italy for his taste and skill in the chorographic art — one of those masterly productions of grace, method, and elegance, in which the whole corps-de-ballet, from the principal dancers to the humblest supernumerary, are all engaged on the stage at the same time; and a hundred and fifty persons

may be seen exhibiting the same attitude, or elevating the same arm or leg with a simultaneous movement, that would lead you to suppose but one mind, one act of volition influenced the moving mass; the ballet was called "*Poliska*." However much the ballet might have claimed his attention, Franz was too deeply occupied with the beautiful Greek to take any note of it, while she seemed to experience an almost childlike delight in watching it; her eager, animated looks contrasting strongly with the utter indifference of her companion, who, during the whole time the piece lasted, never even moved, spite of the furious crashing din produced by the trumpets, cymbals, and Chinese bells, made to produce their loudest sound from the orchestra. The apathetic companion of the fair Greek took no heed of the deafening sounds that prevailed; but was, as far as appearance might be trusted, enjoying soft repose and bright celestial dreams. The ballet at length came to a close, and the curtain fell amid the loud unanimous plaudits of an enthusiastic and delighted audience.

Owing to the very judicious plan of dividing the two acts of the opera with a ballet, the pauses between the performances are very short; the singers in the opera having time to repose themselves and change their costume, when necessary, while the dancers are executing their pirouettes, and exhibiting their graceful steps. The overture to the second act began, and at the first sound of the leader's bow across his violin Franz observed the sleeper slowly arise and approach the Greek girl, who turned around to say a few words to him, and then leaning forward again on her box, she became as absorbed as before in what was going on. The countenance of the person who had addressed her remained so completely in the shade that though Franz tried his utmost he could not distinguish a single feature. The curtain drew up, and the attention of Franz was attracted by the actors, and his eyes quitted their gaze at the box containing the Greek

girl and her strange companion to watch the business of the stage.

Most of my readers are aware that the second act of *Parisina* opens with the celebrated and effective duet, in which *Parisina*, while sleeping, betrays to *Azzo* the secret of her love for *Ugo*. The injured husband goes through all the workings of jealousy, until conviction seizes on his mind, and then, in a frenzy of his rage and indignation, he awakens his guilty wife to tell her he knows her guilt and to threaten her with his vengeance. This duet is one of the finest conceptions that has ever emanated from the fruitful pen of *Donizetti*. *Franz* now listened to it for the third time, yet its notes, so tenderly expressive and fearfully grand, as the wretched husband and wife give vent to their different griefs and passions, thrilled through the soul of *Franz* with an effect equal to his first emotions upon hearing it. Excited beyond his usual calm demeanor, *Franz* rose with the audience, and was about to join the loud enthusiastic applause that followed, but suddenly his purpose was arrested, his hands fell by his sides, and the half-uttered "bravos" expired on his lips.

The occupant of the box in which the Greek girl sat appeared to share the usual animation that prevailed, for he left his seat to stand up in front, so that his countenance being fully revealed, *Franz* had no difficulty in recognizing him as the mysterious inhabitant of *Monte-Cristo*, and the very same individual he had encountered the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum, and whose voice and figure had seemed so familiar to him. All doubt of his identity was now at an end; his singular host evidently resided at Rome. The surprise and agitation occasioned by this full confirmation of *Franz's* former suspicion, had no doubt imparted a corresponding expression to his features, for the countess, after gazing with a puzzled look on his speaking countenance, burst into a fit of laughter and begged to know what had happened.

"*Madame la comtesse*," returned *Franz*, totally unheed-

ing her raillery, "I asked you a short time since if you knew any particulars respecting the Albanian lady opposite; I must now beseech you to inform me who and what is her husband?"

"Nay," answered the countess, "I know no more of him than yourself."

"Perhaps you never before remarked him?"

"What a question! so truly French! Do you not know that we Italians have eyes only for the man we love?"

"True," replied Franz.

"All I can say," continued the countess, taking up the lorgnette, and directing it to the box in question, "is that the gentleman whose history I was unable to furnish, seems to me as though he had just been dug up; he looks more like a corpse permitted by some friendly grave-digger to quit his tomb for awhile, and revisit this earth of ours, than any human being. How ghastly pale he is!"

"Oh, he is always as colorless as you now see him," said Franz.

"Then you know him?" almost screamed the countess. "Oh! pray do, for Heaven's sake, tell us all about it — is he a vampire or a resuscitated corpse or what?"

"I fancy I have seen him before; and I even think he recognizes me."

"And I can well understand," said the countess, shrugging up her beautiful shoulders, as though an involuntary shudder passed through her veins, "that those who had once seen that man will never be likely to forget him."

The sensation experienced by Franz was evidently not peculiar to himself — another and wholly uninterested person felt the same unaccountable awe and misgiving.

"Well," inquired Franz, after the countess had a second time directed her lorgnette at the *loge* of their mysterious *vis-à-vis*, "what do you think of our opposite neighbor?"

"Why, that he is no other than Lord Ruthven himself in a living form."

This fresh allusion to Byron drew a smile to Franz's countenance; although he could but allow that, if anything was likely to induce belief in the existence of vampires, it would be the presence of such a man as the mysterious personage before him.

"I must positively find out who and what he is," said Franz, rising from his seat.

"No, no," cried the countess; "you must not leave me. I depend upon you to escort me home. Oh, indeed, I cannot permit you to go."

"Is it possible," whispered Franz, "that you entertain any fear?"

"I'll tell you," answered the countess.

"Byron had the most perfect belief in the existence of vampires, and even assured me he had seen some. The description he gave me perfectly corresponds with the features and character of the man before us. Oh! it is the exact personification of what I have been led to expect. The coal-black hair, large black glittering eyes, in which a wild, unearthly fire seems burning — the same ghastly paleness. Then, observe, too, that the very female he has with him is altogether unlike all others of her sex. She is a foreigner — a stranger. Nobody knows who she is or where she comes from. No doubt she belongs to the same horrible race he does, and is, like himself, a dealer in magical arts. I entreat of you not to go near him — at least, to-night; and if to-morrow your curiosity still continues as great, pursue your researches if you will; but to-night you neither can nor shall. For that purpose I mean to keep you all to myself."

Franz protested he could not defer his pursuit till the following day for many reasons.

"Listen to me," said the countess, "and do not be so very headstrong. I am going home. I have a party at my house to-night, and therefore cannot possibly remain till the conclusion of the opera. Now, I cannot for one instant believe you so devoid of gallantry as to refuse

a lady your escort when she even condescends to ask you for it."

There was nothing else left for Franz to do but to take up his hat, open the door of the *loge*, and offer the countess his arm.

It was quite evident, by the countess's manner, that her uneasiness was not feigned; and Franz himself could not resist a species of superstitious dread—so much the stronger in him, as it arose from a variety of corroborating recollections, while the terror of the countess sprung from an instinctive feeling, originally created in her mind by the wild tales she had listened to till she believed them truths. Franz could even feel her arm tremble as he assisted her into the carriage.

Upon arriving at her hotel, Franz perceived that she had deceived him when she spoke of expecting company; on the contrary, her own return before the appointed hour seemed greatly to astonish the domestics.

"Excuse my little subterfuge," said the countess, in reply to her companion's half-reproachful observation on the subject; "but that horrid man has made me feel quite uncomfortable, and I longed to be alone that I might compose my startled mind."

Franz essayed to smile.

"Nay," said she, "smile not; it ill accords with the expression of your countenance, and I am sure it springs not from your heart. However, promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Promise me, I say."

"I will do anything you desire, except relinquish my determination of finding out who this man is. I have more reasons than you can imagine for desiring to know who he is, from whence he came, and whither he is going."

"Where he comes from I am ignorant; but I can really tell you where he is going to, and that is down below, without the least doubt."

"Let us only speak of the promise you wished me to make," said Franz.

"Well, then, you must give me your word to return immediately to your hotel, and make no attempt to follow this man to-night. There are certain affinities between the persons we quit and those we meet afterwards. For Heaven's sake do not serve as a conductor between that man and me. Pursue your chase after him to-morrow as eagerly as you please; but never bring him near me if you would not see me die of terror. And now, good night; retire to your apartments, and try to sleep away all recollections of this evening. For my own part, I am quite sure I shall not be able to close my eyes." So saying, the countess quitted Franz, leaving him unable to decide whether she were merely amusing herself at his expense, or that her fears and agitation were genuine.

Upon his return to the hotel, Franz found Albert in his dressing-gown and slippers, listlessly extended on a sofa smoking a cigar.

"My dear fellow," cried he, springing up, "is it really you? Why, I did not expect to see you before to-morrow."

"My dear Albert!" replied Franz, "I am glad of this opportunity to tell you, once and forever, that you entertain a most erroneous notion concerning Italian females. I should have thought the continual failures you have met with in all your own love-affairs might have taught you better by this time."

"Upon my soul! these women would puzzle the very devil to read them aright. Why, here—they give you their hand—they press yours in return—they keep up a whispering conversation—permit you to accompany them home! Why, if a Parisian were to indulge in a quarter of these marks of flattering attention, her reputation would be gone forever."

"And the very reason why the females of this fine country put so little restraint on their words and action.

is because they live so much in public, and have really nothing to conceal. Besides, you must have perceived that the countess was really alarmed."

"At what? at the sight of that respectable gentleman sitting opposite to us in the same *loge* as the lovely Greek girl? Now, for my part, I met them in the lobby after the conclusion of the piece; and hang me, if I can guess where you took your notions of the other world from! I can assure you that this hobgoblin of yours is deuced fine-looking — admirably dressed; indeed, I feel quite sure, from the cut of his clothes, they were made by a first-rate Paris tailor — probably Blin or Humann. He was rather too pale, certainly, but then, you know, paleness is always looked upon as a proof of aristocratical descent and distinguished breeding."

Franz smiled; for he well remembered that Albert particularly prided himself on the entire absence of color in his own complexion.

"Well, that tends to confirm my own ideas," said Franz, "that the countess's suspicions were destitute alike of sense and reason. Did he speak in your hearing? and did you catch any of his words?"

"I did; but they were uttered in the Romaic dialect, I knew that from the mixture of Greek words. I don't know whether I told you that when I was at college I was rather — rather 'strong in Greek.'"

"He spoke the Romaic language, did he?"

"I think so."

"That settles it," murmured Franz. "'Tis he, past all doubt."

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, nothing. But tell me what you were thinking about when I came in?"

"Oh, I was arranging a little surprise for you."

"Indeed! Of what nature?"

"Why, you know, it is quite impossible to procure a carriage."

"Certainly; and I also know that we have done all that human means afforded to endeavor to get one."

"Now, then, in this difficulty a bright idea has flashed across my brain." Franz looked at Albert as though he had not much confidence in the suggestions of his imagination.

"I tell you what, M. Franz!" cried Albert, "you deserve to be called out for such a misgiving and incredulous glance as that you were pleased to bestow on me just now."

"And I promise to give you the satisfaction of a gentleman if your scheme turns out as ingenious as you assert."

"Well, then, hearken to me."

"I listen."

"You agree, do you not, that obtaining a carriage is out of the question?"

"I do."

"Neither can we procure horses?"

"True, we have offered any sums, but have failed."

"Well, now, what do you say to a cart? I dare say such a thing might be had."

"Very possibly."

"And a pair of oxen?"

"As easily found as a cart."

"Then, you see, my good fellow, with a cart and a couple of oxen, our business can be managed. The cart must be tastefully ornamented; and if you and I dress ourselves as Neapolitan reapers, we may get up a striking tableau, after the manner of that splendid picture by Leopold Robert. It would add greatly to the effect if the countess would join us in the costume of a peasant from Puzzoli or Serento. Our group would then be quite complete, more especially as the countess is quite beautiful enough to represent the mother with child."

"Well," said Franz, "this time, M. Albert, I am bound to give you credit for having hit upon a most capital idea."

"And quite a national one, too," replied Albert, with gratified pride. "A mere mask borrowed from our own festivities. Ha! ha! Messieurs les Romains, you thought to make us unhappy strangers trot at the heels of your processions, like so many lazzaroni, because no carriages or horses are to be had in your beggarly city. But you don't know us; when we can't have one thing we invent another."

"And have you communicated your triumphant idea to any person?"

"Only to our host. Upon my return home I sent to desire he would come to me, and I then explained to him what I wished to procure. He assured me that nothing would be easier than to furnish all I desired. One thing I was sorry for: when I bade him have the horns of the oxen gilded, he told me there would not be time, as it would require three days to effect that; so you see we must do without this little superfluity."

"And where is he now?"

"Who?"

"Our host."

"Gone out in search of our equipage; by to-morrow it might be too late."

"Then he will be able to give us an answer to-night?"

"Oh, I expect him every minute."

At this instant the door opened, and the head of Maître Pastrini appeared.

"*Permesso?*" inquired he.

"Certainly — certainly," cried Franz. "Come in, mine host."

"Now, then," asked Albert, eagerly; "have you found the desired cart and oxen?"

"Better than that!" replied the Maître Pastrini, with the air of a man perfectly well satisfied with himself.

"Take care, my worthy host," said Albert, "*better* is a sure enemy to *well*."

"Let your excellencies only leave the matter to me," re-

turned Maître Pastrini, in a tone indicative of unbounded self-confidence.

"But what *have* you done?" asked Franz. "Speak out, there is a worthy fellow."

"Your excellencies are aware," responded the landlord, swelling with importance, "that the Count of Monte-Cristo is living on the same floor with yourselves?"

"I should think we did know it," exclaimed Albert, "since it is owing to that circumstance that we are packed into these small rooms, like two poor students in the back streets of Paris."

"Well, then, the Count of Monte-Cristo, hearing of the dilemma in which you are placed, has sent to offer you seats in his carriage and two places at his windows in the Palace Rospoli."

The friends looked at each other with unutterable surprise.

"But do you think," asked Franz, "that we ought to accept such offers from a perfect stranger?"

"What sort of a person is this Count of Monte-Cristo?" asked Franz of his host.

"A very great nobleman, but whether Maltese or Sicilian I cannot exactly say; but this I know, that he is noble as a Borghese and rich as a gold mine."

"It seems to me," said Franz, speaking in an undertone to Albert, "that if this individual merited the high panegyrics of our landlord, he would have conveyed his invitation through some other channel, and not permitted it to be brought to us in this unceremonious way. He would have written — or ——"

At this instant some one knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Franz.

A servant, wearing a livery of considerable style and richness, appeared at the threshold, and placing two cards in the landlord's hands, who forthwith presented them to the young men, he said: "Please to deliver these, from M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo, to M. le Vicomte Albert de

Morcerf and M. Franz d'Epinay. M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo," continued the servant, "begs these gentlemen's permission to wait upon them as their neighbor, and he will be honored by an intimation of what time they will please to receive him."

"Faith, Franz," whispered Albert, "there is not much to find fault with here."

"Tell the count," replied Franz, "that we will do ourselves the pleasure of calling on him."

The servant bowed and retired.

"That is what I call an elegant mode of attack," said Albert. "You are quite correct in what you stated, Maître Pastrini. The Count of Monte-Cristo is unquestionably a man of first-rate breeding and knowledge of the world."

"Then you accept his offer?" said the host.

"Of course we do," replied Albert. "Still, I must own I am sorry to give up the cart and the group of reapers—it would have produced such an effect! And were it not for the windows at the Palace Rospoli, by way of recompense for the loss of our beautiful scheme, I don't know but what I should have held on by my original plan. What say you, Franz?"

"Oh, I agree with you; the windows in the Palace Rospoli alone decided me."

The truth was, that the mention of two places in the Palace Rospoli had recalled to Franz's mind the conversation he had overheard the preceding evening in the ruins of the Colosseum between the mysterious unknown and the Transtevere, in which the stranger in the cloak had undertaken to obtain the freedom of a condemned criminal; and if this muffled-up individual proved (as Franz felt sure he would) the same as the person he had just seen in the Teatro Argentino, then he should be able to establish his identity, and also to prosecute his researches respecting him with perfect facility and freedom. Franz passed the night in confused dreams respecting the meet-

ings he had already had with his mysterious tormentor, and in waking, speculations as to what the morrow would produce. The next day must clear up every doubt, and unless his neighbor and would-be friend, the Count of Monte-Cristo, possessed the ring of Gyges, and by its power were able to render himself invisible, it was very certain he could not escape this time. Eight o'clock found Franz up and dressed, while Albert, who had not the same motives for early rising, was still profoundly asleep. The first act of Franz was to summon his landlord, who presented himself with his accustomed obsequiousness.

"Pray, Maître Pastrini," asked Franz, "is not some execution appointed to take place to-day?"

"Yes, your excellency; but if your reason for inquiry is, that you may procure a window to view it from, you are much too late."

"Oh, no," answered Franz, "I had no such intention; and even if I had felt a wish to witness the spectacle, I might have done so from Monte Pincio — could I not?"

"Ah!" exclaimed mine host, "I did not think it likely your excellency would have chosen to mingle with such a rabble as are always collected on that hill, which, indeed, they consider as exclusively belonging to themselves."

"Very possibly I may not go," answered Franz; "but, in case I feel disposed, give me some particulars of to-day's executions."

"What particulars would your excellence like to hear?"

"Why, the number of persons condemned to suffer, their names, and description of the death they are to die?"

"That happens just lucky, your excellency! Only a few minutes ago they brought me the *tavolettas*."

"What are they?"

"Sort of wooden tablets hung up at the corners of streets the evening before an execution, on which is pasted up a paper containing the names of the condemned persons,

their crimes, and mode of punishment; the reason for so publicly announcing all this is that all good and faithful Catholics may offer up their prayers for the unfortunate culprits, and, above all, beseech of Heaven to grant them a sincere repentance."

"And these tablets are brought to you, that you may add your prayers to those of the faithful, are they?" asked Franz, somewhat incredulously.

"Oh, dear, no, your excellency; I have not time for anybody's affairs but my own and those of my honorable guests; but I make an agreement with the man who pastes up the papers, and he brings them to me as he would the play-bills, that in case any person staying at my hotel should like to witness an execution, he may obtain every requisite information concerning the time and place, etc."

"Upon my word, that is most delicate attention on your part, Maître Pastrini," cried Franz.

"Why, your excellency," returned the landlord, chuckling and rubbing his hands with infinite complacency, "I think I may take upon myself to say I neglect nothing to deserve the support and patronage of the noble visitors to this poor hotel."

"I see that plainly enough, my most excellent host, and you may rely upon my repeating so striking a proof of your attention to your guests wherever I go. Meanwhile, oblige me by a sight of one of these *tavolettas*."

"Nothing can be easier than to comply with your excellency's wish," said the landlord, opening the door of the chamber. "I have caused one to be placed on the landing, close by your apartment." Then, taking the tablet from the wall, he handed it to Franz, who read as follows:

"The public is informed that on Wednesday, February 23d, being the first day of the Carnival, two executions will take place in the Place del Popolo, by order of the Tribunal de la Rota, of two individuals, named Andrea Rondola and Peppino, otherwise called Rocca Priori, the

former found guilty of the murder of a venerable and exemplary priest, named Don Cæsar Torlini, canon of the church of Saint-Jean-de-Latran, and the latter convicted of being an accomplice of the atrocious and sanguinary bandit, Luigi Vampa and his troop. The first named malefactor will be *mazzolato*, the second *decapitato*. The prayers of all good Christians are entreated for these unfortunate men, that it may please God to awaken them to a sense of their guilt, and to grant them a hearty and sincere repentance for their crimes."

This was precisely what Franz had heard the evening before in the ruins of the Colosseum. No part of the programme differed — the names of the condemned persons — their crimes and mode of punishment — all agreed with his previous information. In all probability, therefore, the Transtevere was no other than the bandit Luigi Vampa himself, and the man shrouded in the mantle the same he had known as "Sinbad the Sailor," but who, no doubt, was still pursuing his philanthropic expedition in Rome, as he had already done at Porto-Vecchio and Tunis. Time was getting on, however, and Franz deemed it advisable to awaken Albert; but at the moment he prepared to proceed to his chamber, his friend entered the salon in perfect costume for the day. The anticipated delights of the Carnival had so run in his head as to make him leave his pillow long before his usual hour.

"Now, my excellent Maître Pastrini," said Franz, addressing his landlord, "since we are both ready, do you think we may proceed at once to visit the Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"Most assuredly," replied he. "The Count of Monte-Cristo is always an early riser; and I can answer for his having been up these two hours."

"Then you really consider we shall not be intruding if we pay our respects to him directly?"

"Oh, I am quite sure. I will take all the blame on myself if you find I have led you into an error."

"Well, then, if it be so; are you ready, Albert?"

"Perfectly!"

"Let us go and return our best thanks for his courtesy."

"Yes, let us do so."

The landlord preceded the friends across the landing, which was all that separated them from the apartments of the count, rang at a bell, and upon the door being opened by a servant, said:

"*I Signori Francesi.*"

The domestic bowed respectfully, and invited them to enter. They passed through two rooms, furnished with a style and luxury they had not calculated on finding under the roof of Maître Pastrini, and were shown into an elegantly fitted-up salon. The richest Turkey carpets covered the floor, and the softest and most inviting couches, *bergères*, and sofas offered their high-piled and yielding cushions to such as desired repose or refreshment. Splendid paintings by the first masters were ranged against the walls, intermingled with magnificent trophies of war, while heavy curtains of costly tapestry were suspended before the different doors of the room.

"If your excellencies will please be seated," said the man, "I will let M. le comte know you are here."

And with these words he disappeared behind one of the tapestried *portières*. As the door opened, the sound of a *guzla* reached the ears of the young men; but was almost immediately lost, for the rapid closing of the door merely allowed one rich swell of harmony to enter the salon. Franz and Albert looked inquiringly at each other, and at the gorgeous fittings-up of the apartment. All seemed even more splendid at a second view than it had done at their first rapid survey.

"Well," said Franz to his friend, "what think you of all this?"

"Why, upon my soul, my dear fellow, it strikes me our elegant and attentive neighbor must either be some suc-

cessful stock-jobber, who has speculated in the fall of the Spanish funds, or some prince travelling *incog*."

"Hush! hush!" replied Franz, "we shall ascertain who and what he is — he comes!"

As Franz spoke, he heard the sound of the door turning on its hinges, and almost immediately afterwards the tapestry was drawn aside, and the owner of all these riches stood before the two young men. Albert instantly arose to meet him, but Franz remained, in a manner, spellbound on his chair, for in the person of him who had just entered he recognized not only the mysterious visitant of the Colosseum, and the occupant of the *loge* at the Salle Argentino, but also his singular host of Monte-Cristo.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LA MAZZOLATA.

"GENTLEMEN," said the Count of Monte-Cristo, as he entered, "I pray you excuse me for suffering my visit to be anticipated, but I feared to disturb you by presenting myself earlier at your apartments; besides, you sent me word you would come to me, and I have held myself at your disposal."

"Franz and I have to thank you a thousand times, M. le comte," returned Albert; "you extricate us from a great dilemma, and we were on the point of inventing some very fantastic vehicle when your friendly invitation reached us."

"Indeed!" returned the count, motioning the two young men to sit down. "It was the fault of that block-headed Pastrini that I did not sooner assist you in your distress. He did not mention a syllable of your embarrassment to me, when he knows that, alone and isolated as I am, I seek every opportunity of making the acquaintance of my neighbors. As soon as I learned I could in any way assist you, I most eagerly seized the opportunity of offering my services."

The two young men bowed. Franz had, as yet, found nothing to say; he had adopted no determination; and as nothing in the count's manner manifested the wish that he should recognize him, he did not know whether to make any allusion to the past or wait until he had more proof; besides, although sure it was he who had been in the box the previous evening, he could not be equally positive that he was the man he had seen in the Colosseum. He re-

solved, therefore, to let things take their course without making any direct overture to the count. Besides, he had this advantage over him, he was master of his secret, whilst he had no hold on Franz, who had nothing to conceal.

However, he resolved to lead the conversation to a subject which might possibly clear up his doubts.

"M. le comte," said he, "you have offered us places in your carriage, and at your windows of the Rospoli Palace. Can you tell us where we can obtain a sight of the Place del Popolo?"

"Ah!" said the count, negligently, looking attentively at Morcerf, "is there not something like an execution upon the Place del Popolo?"

"Yes," returned Franz, finding that the count was coming to the point he wished.

"Stay, I think I told my steward yesterday to attend to this; perhaps I can render you this slight service also."

He extended his hand and rang the bell thrice.

"Did you ever occupy yourself," said he to Franz, "with the employment of time and the means of simplifying the summoning of your servants? I have — when I ring once, it is for my valet; twice, for my maître d'hôtel; thrice, for my steward; thus I do not waste a minute nor a word. Here he is!" A man of about five and forty to fifty entered, exactly resembling the smuggler who had introduced Franz into the cavern, but he did not appear to recognize him. It was evident he had his orders.

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "have you procured me windows looking on the Place del Popolo, as I ordered you yesterday?"

"Yes, excellency," returned the steward, "but it was very late."

"Did I not tell you I wished for one?" replied the count, frowning.

"And your excellency has one, which was to let to Prince Lobanieff, but I was obliged to pay a hundred ——"

"That will do—that will do, Monsieur Bertuccio; spare these gentlemen all such domestic arrangements. You have the window, that is sufficient. Give orders to the coachman, and be in readiness on the stairs to conduct us to it."

The steward bowed, and was about to quit the room.

"Ah!" continued the count, "be good enough to ask Pastrini if he has received the *tavoletta*, and if he can send us an account of the execution."

"There is no need to do that," said Franz, taking out his tablets, "for I saw the account, and copied it down."

"Very well, you can retire, Maître Bertuccio; let us know when breakfast is ready. These gentlemen," added he, turning to the two friends, "will, I trust, do me the honor to breakfast?"

"But M. le comte," said Albert, "we shall abuse your kindness."

"Not at all; on the contrary, you will give me great pleasure. You will one or other of you, perhaps both, return it to me at Paris. Maître Bertuccio, lay covers for three."

He took Franz's tablets out of his hand.

"We announce," he read, in the same tone with which he would have read a newspaper, "'that to-day, the 23d of February, will be executed Andrea Rondola, guilty of murder on the person of the respectable and venerated Don Cæsar Torlini, canon of the church Saint-Jean-de-Latran, and Peppino, called Rocca Priori, convicted of complicity with the detestable bandit Luigi Vampa and the men of his troop.' Hum! 'The first will be *mazzolato*, the second *decapitato*.' Yes," continued the count, "it was first arranged in this way, but I think since yesterday some change has taken place in the order of the ceremony."

"Really!" said Franz.

"Yes, I passed the evening at the Cardinal Rospigliosi's, and there mention was made of something like a pardon for one of the two men."

"For Andrea Rondola?" asked Franz.

"No," replied the count, carelessly, "for the other" (he glanced at the tablets as if to recall the name), "for Peppino, called Rocca Priori. You are thus deprived of seeing a man guillotined, but the *mazzolato* still remains, which is a very curious punishment when seen for the first time, and even the second, whilst the other, as you must know, is very simple. The *mandaia* never fails, never trembles, never strikes thirty times ineffectually, like the soldier who beheaded the Comte de Chalais, and to whose tender mercy Richelieu had doubtless recommended the sufferer. Ah!" added the count in a contemptuous tone, "do not tell me of European punishments; they are in the infancy, or rather the old age of cruelty."

"Really, M. le comte," replied Franz, "one would think that you had studied the different tortures of all the nations of the world."

"There are, at least, few that I have not seen," said the count, coldly.

"And you took pleasure in beholding these dreadful spectacles?"

"My first sentiment was horror, the second, indifference, the third, curiosity."

"Curiosity! that is a terrible word."

"Why so? In life our greatest preoccupation is death: is it not, then, curious to study the different ways by which the soul and body can part, and how, according to their different characters, temperaments, and even the different customs of their countries, individuals bear the transition from life to death; from existence to annihilation? As for myself, I can assure you of one thing, the more men you see die, the easier it becomes to die; and in my opinion, death may be a torture, but it is not an expiation."

"I do not quite understand you," replied Franz, "pray explain your meaning, for you excite my curiosity to the highest pitch."

"Listen," said the count, and deep hatred mounted to his face, as the blood would to the face of any other. "If a man had, by unheard-of and excruciating torture, destroyed your father, your mother, your mistress; in a word, one of those beings who, when they are torn from you, leave a desolation, a wound that never closes, in your breast, do you think the reparation that society gives you sufficient by causing the knife of the guillotine to pass between the base of the occiput and the trapezal muscles of the murderer, because he who has caused us years of moral sufferings, undergoes a few moments of physical pain?"

"Yes, I know," said Franz, "that human justice is insufficient to console us; she can give blood in return for blood, that is all; but you must demand from her only what it is in her power to grant."

"I will put another case to you," continued the count, "that where society, attacked by the death of a person, avenges death by death. But are there not a thousand tortures by which a man may be made to suffer without society taking the least cognizance of them or offering him even the insufficient means of vengeance of which we have just spoken? Are there not crimes for which the empalement of the Turks, the augers of the Persians, the stake and the brand of the Iroquois Indians, are inadequate tortures, and which are unpunished by society? Answer me, do not these crimes exist?"

"Yes," answered Franz, "and it is to punish them that duelling is tolerated."

"Ah, duelling!" cried the count, "a pleasant manner, upon my soul, of arriving at your end when that end is vengeance! A man has carried off your mistress, a man has seduced your wife, a man has dishonored your daughter; he has rendered the whole life of one who had the right to expect from Heaven that portion of happiness God has promised to every one of his creatures, an existence of misery and infamy, and you think you are avenged

because you send a ball through the head, or pass a sword through the breast of that man who has planted madness in your brain, and despair in your heart—without recollecting that it is often he who comes off victorious from the strife, absolved of all crime in the eyes of the world! No, no,” continued the count, “had I to avenge myself, it is not thus I would take revenge.”

“Then you disapprove of duelling! you would not fight a duel?” asked Albert, in his turn astonished at this strange theory.

“Oh, yes,” replied the count; “understand me, I would fight a duel for a trifle, for an insult, for a blow, and the more so, that, thanks to my skill in all bodily exercises, and the indifference to danger I have gradually acquired, I should be almost certain to kill my man. Oh! I would fight for such a cause; but in return for a slow, profound, eternal torture, I would give back the same were it possible; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, as the Orientals say—our masters in everything; those favored creatures who have formed for themselves a life of dreams and a paradise of realities.”

“But,” said Franz to the count, “with this theory, which renders you at once judge and executioner of your own cause, it would be difficult to adopt a course that would ever prevent your falling under the power of the law. Hatred is blind; rage carries you away; and he who pours out vengeance runs the risk of tasting a bitter draught.”

“Yes, if he be poor and inexperienced, not if he be rich and skilful; besides, the worst that could happen to him would be the punishment of which we have already spoken, and which the philanthropic French Revolution has substituted for being torn to pieces by horses or broken on the wheel. What matters this punishment as long as he is avenged? On my word, I almost regret that, in all probability, this miserable Peppino will not be *decapitato*, as you might have had an opportunity then of seeing how

short a time the punishment lasts, and whether it is worth even mentioning; but, really, this is a most singular conversation for the Carnival, gentlemen; how did it arise? Ah! I recollect; you asked for a place at my window; you shall have it; but let us first sit down to table, for there comes a servant to inform us that breakfast is ready."

As he spoke, a servant opened one of the four doors of the salon, saying:

"Al suo comodo!"

The two young men rose and entered the breakfast-room.

During the meal, which was excellent and admirably served, Franz looked repeatedly at Albert in order to remark the impression which he doubted not had been made on him by the words of their entertainer, but whether with his usual carelessness he had paid but little attention to him, whether the explanation of the Count of Monte-Cristo with regard to duelling had satisfied him, or whether the events which Franz knew of had a doubtful effect on him alone, he remarked that his companion did not pay the least regard to them, but on the contrary ate like a man who for the last four or five months had been condemned to partake of Italian cookery—that is, the worst in the world. As for the count, he just touched the dishes; he seemed as if he fulfilled the duties of an entertainer by sitting down with his guests, and awaited their departure to be served with some strange or more delicate food. This brought back to Franz, in spite of himself, the recollection of the terror with which the count had inspired the Countess G——, and her firm conviction that the man in the opposite box was a vampire.

At the end of the breakfast Franz took out his watch.

"Well," said the count, "what are you doing?"

"You must excuse us, M. le comte," returned Franz, "but we still have much to do."

"What may that be?"

"We have no disguises, and it is absolutely necessary to procure them."

"Do not concern yourself about that; we have, I think, a private room in the Place del Popolo; I will have whatever costumes you choose brought to us, and you can dress there."

"After the execution?" cried Franz.

"Before or after, which you please."

"Opposite the scaffold?"

"The scaffold forms a part of the *fête*."

"M. le comte, I have reflected on the matter," said Franz; "I thank you for your courtesy, but I shall content myself with accepting a place in your carriage and at your window in the Rospoli Palace, and I leave you at liberty to dispose of my place at the Place del Popolo."

"But I warn you, you will lose a very curious sight," returned the count.

"You will relate it to me," replied Franz, "and the recital from your lips will make as great an impression on me as if I had witnessed it. I have more than once intended witnessing an execution, but I have never been able to make up my mind; and you, Albert?"

"I," replied the viscount, "I saw Castaing executed; but I think I was rather intoxicated that day, for I had quitted college the same morning, and we had passed the previous night at a tavern."

"Besides, it is no reason, because you have not seen an execution at Paris, that you should not see one anywhere else; when you travel, it is to see everything. Think what a figure you would make when you are asked, 'How do they execute at Rome?' and you reply, 'I do not know!' And, besides, they say that the culprit is an infamous scoundrel, who killed, with a log of wood, a worthy canon who had brought him up like his own son. *Diable!* when a churchman is killed, it should be with a different weapon than a log, especially when he has behaved like a father. If you went to Spain, would you not see the bull-fights? Well, suppose it is a bull-fight you are going to see! Recollect the ancient Romans of the Circus, and the sports

where they killed three hundred lions and a hundred men. Think of the eighty thousand applauding spectators, the sage matrons who took their daughters, and the charming Vestals who made with the thumb of their white hands the fatal sign that said, 'Come, dispatch this man already nearly dead.'"

"Shall you go, then, Albert?" asked Franz.

"*Ma foi!* yes; like you, I hesitated, but the count's eloquence decides me."

"Let us go, then," said Franz, "since you wish it, but on our way to the Place del Popolo I wish to pass through the Rue du Cours. Is this possible, M. le comte?"

"On foot, yes! in a carriage, no."

"I will go on foot, then."

"Is it important that you should pass through that street?"

"Yes, there is something I wish to see."

"Well, we will pass by the Rue du Cours. We will send the carriage to wait for us on the Piazza del Popolo, by the Strada del Babuino, for I shall be glad to pass, myself, through the Rue du Cours, to see if some orders I have given have been executed."

"Excellency," said a servant, opening the door, "a man in the dress of a penitent wishes to speak to you."

"Ah! yes!" returned the count, "I know who he is; gentlemen, will you return to the salon? you will find on the centre table some excellent Havana cigars. I will rejoin you directly."

The young men rose and returned into the salon, whilst the count, again apologizing, left by another door. Albert, who was a great smoker, and who had considered it no small sacrifice to be deprived of the cigars of the Café de Paris, approached the table, and uttered a cry of joy at seeing some veritable *pueros*.

"Well," asked Franz, "what think you of the Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"What do I think?" said Albert, evidently surprised

at such a question from his companion, "I think that he is a delightful fellow, who does the honors of his table admirably; who has travelled much, read much, is, like Brutus, of the Stoic school, and moreover," added he, sending a volume of smoke up towards the ceiling, "that he has excellent cigars."

Such was Albert's opinion of the count, and as Franz well knew that Albert professed never to form an opinion except upon long reflection, he made no attempt to change it.

"But," said he, "did you remark one very singular thing?"

"What?"

"How attentively he looked at you."

"At me?"

"Yes."

Albert reflected.

"Ah!" replied he, sighing, "that is not very surprising; I have been more than a year absent from Paris, and my clothes are of a most antiquated cut; the count takes me for a provincial. The first opportunity you have, deceive him, I beg you, and tell him I am nothing of the kind."

Franz smiled: an instant after, the count entered.

"I am now quite at your service, gentlemen," said he. "The carriage is going one way to the Place del Popolo, and we will go another; and, if you please, by the Rue du Cours. Take some more of these cigars, M. de Morcerf."

"With all my heart," returned Albert; "these Italian cigars are horrible. When you come to Paris, I will return all this."

"I will not refuse. I intend going there soon, and, since you allow me, I will pay you a visit. Come! we have not any time to lose; it is half-past twelve, let us set off."

All three descended: the coachman received his master's orders and drove down the Via del Babuino. Whilst the

three gentlemen walked towards the Place d'Espagne and the Via Frattina, which led directly between the Fiano and Rospoli palaces, all Franz's attention was directed towards the windows of that last palace, for he had not forgotten the signal agreed upon between the man in the mantle and the Transtevere peasant.

"Which are your windows?" asked he of the count, with as much indifference as he could assume.

"The three last," returned he, with a negligence evidently unaffected; for he could not imagine with what intention the question was put.

Franz glanced rapidly towards the three windows. The side windows were hung with yellow damask, and the centre one with white damask and a red cross. The man in the mantle had kept his promise to the Transtevere, and there could now be no doubt that he was the count. The three windows were still untenanted. Preparations were making on every side; chairs were placed, scaffolds were raised, and windows were hung with flags. The masks could not appear; the carriages could not move about; but the masks were visible behind the windows, the carriages, and the doors.

Franz, Albert, and the count continued to descend the Rue du Cours. As they approached the Place del Popolo the crowd became more dense, and above the heads of the multitude two objects were visible: the obelisk surmounted by a cross, which marks the centre of the place, and before the obelisk, at the point where the three streets, del Babuino, del Corso, and di Ripetta, meet, the two uprights of the scaffold, between which glittered the curved knife of the *mandaña*. At the corner of the street they met the count's steward, who was awaiting his master.

The window, let at an exorbitant price, which the count had doubtless wished to conceal from his guests, was on the second floor of the great palace, situated between the Rue del Babuino and the Monte-Pincio. It consisted, as we have said, of a small dressing-room opening into a bed-

room, and when the door of communication was shut, the inmates were quite alone. On two chairs were laid as many elegant costumes of *paillasse*, in blue and white satin.

"As you left the choice of your costumes to me," said the count to the two friends, "I have had these brought, as they will be the most worn this year; and they are most suitable on account of the *confetti* sweetmeats, as they do not show the flour."

Franz heard the words of the count but imperfectly, and he perhaps did not fully appreciate this new attention to their wishes; for he was wholly absorbed by the spectacle that the Piazza del Popolo presented, and by the terrible instrument that was in the centre. It was the first time Franz had ever seen a guillotine,—we say guillotine, because the Roman *mandaiä* is formed on almost the same model as the French instrument; the knife, which is shaped like a crescent, that cuts with the convex side, falls from a less height, and that is all the difference. Two men, seated on the movable plank on which the culprit is laid, were eating their breakfasts, whilst waiting for the criminal. Their repast consisted, apparently, of bread and sausages. One of them lifted the plank, took thence a flask of wine, drank some, and then passed it to his companion. These two men were the executioner's assistants. At this sight Franz felt the perspiration start forth upon his brow. The prisoners, transported the previous evening from the Carceri Nuovo to the little church of Sainte-Marie del Popolo, had passed the night, each accompanied by two priests, in a chapel closed by a grating, before which were two sentinels, relieved at intervals. A double line of carbineers, placed on each side of the door of the church, reached to the scaffold, and formed a circle around it, leaving a path about ten feet wide, and around the guillotine a space of nearly a hundred feet. All the rest of the place was paved with heads. Many women held their infants on their shoulders, and thus the children

had the best view. The Monte-Pincio seemed a vast amphitheatre filled with spectators; the balconies of the two churches at the corner of the Rue del Babuino and the Rue di Ripetta were crammed; the steps even seemed a parti-colored sea, that was impelled towards the portico; every niche in the wall held its living statue. What the count said was true — the most curious spectacle in life is that of death. And yet, instead of the silence and the solemnity demanded by the occasion, a noise of laughter and jest arose from the crowd; it was evident that this execution was, in the eyes of the people, only the commencement of the Carnival. Suddenly the tumult ceased, as if by magic; the doors of the church opened. A brotherhood of penitents, clothed from head to foot in robes of gray sackcloth, with holes for the eyes alone, and holding in their hand a lighted taper, appeared first; the chief marched at their head. Behind the penitents came a man of vast stature and proportions. He was naked, with the exception of cloth drawers, at the left side of which hung a large knife in a sheath, and he bore on his right shoulder a heavy mace. This man was the executioner. He had, moreover, sandals bound on his feet by cords. Behind the executioner came, in the order in which they were to die, first Peppino, and then Andrea. Each was accompanied by two priests. Neither had their eyes bandaged. Peppino walked with a firm step, doubtless aware of what awaited him. Andrea was supported by two priests. Each of them kissed, from time to time, the crucifix a confessor held out to them. At this sight alone Franz felt his legs tremble under him: he looked at Albert — he was as white as his shirt, and mechanically cast away his cigar — although he had not half smoked it. The count alone seemed unmoved — nay, more, a slight color seemed striving to rise in his pale cheeks. His nostrils dilated like a wild beast that scents its prey, and his lips, half open, disclosed his white teeth, small and sharp like those of a jackal. And yet his features wore an expres-

sion of smiling tenderness, such as Franz had never before witnessed in them; his black eyes especially were full of kindness and pity. However, the two culprits advanced, and as they approached, their faces became visible. Peppino was a handsome young man of four or five and twenty, bronzed by the sun; he carried his head erect, and seemed to look on which side his liberator would appear. Andrea was short and fat. His visage, marked with brutal cruelty, did not indicate age; he might be thirty. In prison he had suffered his beard to grow — his head fell on his shoulder — his legs bent beneath him — and he seemed to obey a mechanical movement, of which he was unconscious.

"I thought," said Franz to the count, "that you told me there would be but one execution?"

"I told you true," replied he, coldly.

"However, here are two culprits."

"Yes; but only one of these two is about to die! — the other has long years to live."

"If the pardon is to come, there is no time to lose."

"And see, here it is," said the count.

At the moment when Peppino arrived at the foot of the *mandaia*, a penitent, who seemed to arrive late, forced his way through the soldiers, and, advancing to the chief of the brotherhood, gave him a folded paper.

The piercing eye of Peppino had noticed all. The chief took the paper, unfolded it, and, raising his hands, "Heaven be praised! and his holiness also!" said he, in a loud voice. "Here is a pardon for one of the prisoners!"

"A pardon!" cried the people with one voice. "A pardon!" At this cry Andrea raised his head.

"Pardon for whom?" cried he.

Peppino remained breathless.

"A pardon for Peppino, called Rocca Priori," said the principal friar. And he passed the paper to the officer commanding the carbineers, who read and returned it to him.

"For Peppino?" cried Andrea, who seemed aroused

from the torpor in which he had plunged. "Why for him and not for me? We ought to die together. I was promised he should die with me. You have no right to put me to death alone. I will not die alone — I will not." And he broke from the priests, struggling and raving like a wild beast, and striving desperately to break the cords that bound his hands.

The executioner made a sign, and his assistant leaped from the scaffold and seized him.

"What is passing?" asked Franz of the count. For as all this occurred in the Roman dialect, he had not perfectly comprehended it.

"Do you not understand," returned the count, "that this human creature who is about to die is furious that his fellow-sufferer does not perish with him? and, were he able, he would rather tear him to pieces with his teeth and nails than let him enjoy the life he himself is about to be deprived of. Oh! man, man! — race of crocodiles!" cried the count, extending his clenched hands towards the crowd; "how well do I recognize you there, and that at all times you are worthy of yourselves!"

All this time Andrea and the two executioners were struggling on the ground, and he kept exclaiming, "He ought to die! — he shall die! — I will not die alone!"

"Look! look!" cried the count, seizing the young men's hands; "look, for on my soul it is curious. Here is a man who had resigned himself to his fate; who was going to the scaffold to die — like a coward, it is true — but he was about to die without resistance. Do you know what gave him strength? — do you know what consoled him? It was, that another partook of his punishment — that another partook of his anguish — that another was to die before him! Lead two sheep to the butcher's, two oxen to the slaughter-house, and make one of them understand his companion will not die: the sheep will bleat for pleasure, the ox will bellow with joy. But man — man, whom God created in his own image — man, upon whom God has

laid his first, his sole commandment, to love his neighbor — man, to whom God has given a voice to express his thoughts — what is his first cry when he hears his fellow-man is saved? A blasphemy! Honor to man — this masterpiece of nature — this king of the creation!" And the count burst into a laugh; but a terrible laugh, that showed he must have suffered horribly to be able thus to laugh.

However, the struggle still continued, and it was dreadful to witness. The people all took part against Andrea, and twenty thousand voices cried, "Put him to death — put him to death!"

Franz sprang back; but the count seized his arm, and held him before the window.

"What are you doing?" said he. "Do you pity him? If you heard the cry of 'mad dog!' you would take your gun — you would unhesitatingly shoot the poor beast, who, after all, was only guilty of having been bitten by another dog. And yet you pity a man who, without being bitten by one of his race, has yet murdered his benefactor; and who, now unable to kill any one, because his hands are bound, wishes to see his companion in captivity perish. No — no; look! — look!"

This recommendation was needless; Franz was fascinated by the horrible spectacle. The two assistants had borne Andrea to the scaffold; and there, spite of his struggles, his bites, and his cries, had forced him to his knees. During this time the executioner had raised his mace, and signed to the men to get out of the way; the criminal strove to rise, but, ere he had time, the mace fell on his left temple. A dull and heavy sound was heard, and the man dropped like an ox on his face, and then turned over on his back. The executioner let fall his mace, drew his knife, and with one stroke opened his throat, and, mounting on his stomach, stamped violently on it with his feet. At every stroke a jet of blood sprang from the wound.

This time Franz could sustain himself no longer, but sank, half fainting, into a seat. Albert, with his eyes closed, was standing grasping the window curtains. The count was erect and triumphant, like the avenging angel!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE CARNIVAL AT ROME.

WHEN Franz recovered his senses, he saw Albert drinking a glass of water, of which his paleness showed he stood in great need; and the count, who was assuming his costume of *paillasse*. He glanced mechanically towards the place; all had disappeared — scaffold, executioners, victims. Nought remained but the people, full of noise and excitement. The bell of Monte-Citorio, which only sounds on the pope's decease and the opening of the Carnival, was ringing a joyous peal.

"Well," asked he of the count, "what has then happened?"

"Nothing," replied the count; "only, as you see, the Carnival has commenced. Make haste and dress yourself."

"In reality," said Franz, "this horrible scene has passed away like a dream."

"It is but a dream — the nightmare, that has disturbed you."

"Yes, that I have suffered. But the culprit?"

"That is a dream also; only he has remained asleep, whilst you have awoke; and who knows which of you is the most fortunate?"

"But Peppino, what has become of him?"

"Peppino is a lad of sense, who, unlike most men, who are furious if they pass unnoticed, was delighted to see that the general attention was directed towards his companion. He profited by this distraction to slip away amongst the crowd, without even thanking the worthy

priests who accompanied him. Decidedly, man is an ungrateful and egotistical animal. But dress yourself; see, M. de Morcerf sets you the example."

Albert was in reality drawing on the satin pantaloons over his black trousers and varnished boots.

"Well, Albert," said Franz, "do you feel much inclined to join the revels? Come, answer frankly."

"*Ma foi!* no," returned Albert, "but I am really glad to have seen such a sight; and I understand what M. le Comte said, that when you have once habituated yourself to a similar spectacle, it is the only one that causes you any emotion."

"Without reflecting that this is the only moment in which you can study characters," said the count; "on the steps of the scaffold death tears off the mask that has been worn through life, and the real visage is disclosed. It must be allowed Andrea was not very handsome—the hideous scoundrel! Come, dress yourselves, gentlemen, dress yourselves."

Franz felt that it would be ridiculous not to follow his two companions' example. He assumed his costume, and fastened on his mask, that scarcely equalled the pallor of his own face. Their toilet finished, they descended; the carriage awaited them at the door, filled with sweetmeats and bouquets. They fell into the line of carriages.

It is difficult to form an idea of the perfect change that had taken place. Instead of the spectacle of gloomy and silent death, the Place del Popolo presented a spectacle of gay and noisy mirth and revelry. A crowd of masks flowed in from all sides, escaping from the doors, descending from the windows. From every street and every turn drove carriages filled with pierrots, harlequins, dominoes, marquises, Transteveres, knights, and peasants—screaming, fighting, gesticulating, whirling eggs filled with flour, confetti, nosegays, attacking, with their sarcasms and their missiles, friends and foes, companions and strangers, indiscriminately, without any one taking offence, or doing

anything else than laugh. Franz and Albert were like men who, to drive away a violent sorrow, have recourse to wine, and who, as they drink and become intoxicated, feel a thick veil drawn between the past and the present. They saw, or rather continued to see, the image of what they had witnessed; but, little by little, the general vertigo seized them, and they felt themselves obliged to take a part in the noise and confusion. A handful of confetti that came from a neighboring carriage, and which, whilst it covered Morcerf and his two companions with dust, pricked his neck and that portion of his face uncovered by his mask like a hundred pins, plunged him into the general combat in which all the masks around him were engaged. He rose in his turn, and seizing handfuls of confetti and sweetmeats, with which the carriage was filled, cast them with all the force and address he was master of.

The strife had fairly commenced, and the recollection of what they had seen half an hour before was gradually effaced from the young men's minds, so much were they occupied by the gay and glittering procession they now beheld. As for the Count of Monte-Cristo, he had never for an instant showed any appearance of having been moved. Imagine the large and splendid Rue du Cours, bordered from one end to the other with lofty palaces, with their balconies hung with carpets, and their windows with flags; at these balconies three hundred thousand spectators—Romans, Italians, strangers from all parts of the world. The united aristocracy of birth, wealth, and genius; lovely women who, yielding to the influence of the scene, bend over their balconies, or lean from their windows, and shower down confetti, which are returned by bouquets. The air seems darkened with confetti that fall, and flowers that mount. In the streets the lively crowd, dressed in the most fantastic costumes. Gigantic cabbages walked gravely about—buffaloes' heads belowered from men's shoulders—dogs who walked on their

hind legs. In the midst of all this a mask is lifted, and, as in Callot's *Temptation of St. Anthony*, a lovely face is exhibited, which we would fain follow, but from which we are separated by troops of fiends—and this will give a faint idea of the Carnival at Rome.

At the second turn the count stopped the carriage, and requested permission to quit them, leaving the vehicle at their disposal. Franz looked up; they were opposite the Rospoli Palace. At the centre window, the one hung with white damask with a red cross, was a blue domino, beneath which Franz's imagination easily pictured the beautiful Greek of the Argentine.

"Gentlemen," said the count, springing out, "when you are tired of being actors, and wish to become spectators of this scene, you know you have places at my windows. In the meantime, dispose of my coachman, my carriage, and my servants."

We have forgotten to mention that the count's coachman was attired in a bearskin, exactly resembling Odry's in *The Bear and the Pacha*; and the two footmen behind were dressed up as two green monkeys, with spring masks, with which they made grimaces at every one they passed.

Franz thanked the count for his attention. As for Albert, he was busily occupied throwing bouquets at a carriage full of Roman peasants that was passing near him. Unfortunately for him, the line of carriages moved on again, and whilst he descended the Place del Popolo, the other ascended towards the Palais de Venise.

"Ah! my dear fellow!" said he to Franz, "you did not see?"

"What?"

"There — that calash filled with Roman peasants."

"No."

"Well, I am convinced they are all charming women."

"How unfortunate you were masked, Albert!" said Franz; "here was an opportunity of making up for past disappointments."

"Oh!" replied he, half laughing, half serious; "I hope the Carnival will not pass without some amends in one shape or the other."

But, in spite of Albert's hope, the day passed unmarked by any incident, except meeting two or three times the calash with the Roman peasants. At one of these encounters, accidentally or purposely, Albert's mask fell off. He instantly rose and cast the remainder of the bouquets into the carriage. Doubtless one of the charming females Albert had divined beneath their coquettish disguise was touched by his gallantry; for, in her turn, as the carriage of the two friends passed her, she threw a bunch of violets into it. Albert seized it, and as Franz had no reason to suppose it was addressed to him, he suffered Albert to retain it. Albert placed it in his buttonhole, and the carriage went triumphantly on.

"Well," said Franz to him; "here is the commencement of an adventure."

"Laugh, if you please. I really think so. So I will not abandon this bouquet."

"*Pardieu!*" returned Franz, laughing, "in token of your gratitude."

The jest, however, soon appeared to become earnest; for when Albert and Franz again encountered the carriage with the *contadini*, the one who had thrown the violets to Albert clapped her hands when she beheld them in his buttonhole.

"Bravo! bravo!" said Franz; "things go wonderfully. Shall I leave you? Perhaps you would prefer being alone?"

"No," replied he; "I will not be caught like a fool at a first demonstration by a rendezvous beneath the clock, as they say at the opera balls. If the fair peasant wishes to carry matters any further, we shall find her, or rather she will find us, to-morrow; then she will give me some sign or other, and I shall know what I have to do."

"On my word," said Franz, "you are wise as Nestor and

prudent as Ulysses, and your fair Circe must be very skilful or very powerful if she succeed in changing you into a beast of any kind."

Albert was right; the fair unknown had resolved, doubtless, to carry the intrigue no farther; for although the young men made several more turns, they did not again see the calash, which had turned up one of the neighboring streets. Then they returned to the Rospoli Palace; but the count and the blue domino had also disappeared; two windows hung with yellow damask were still occupied by the persons whom the count had invited. At this moment the same bell that had proclaimed the commencement of the mascherata sounded the retreat. The file on the Corso broke the line, and in a second all the carriages had disappeared. Franz and Albert were opposite the Via delle Maratte; the coachman, without saying a word, drove up it, passed along the Place d'Espagne and the Rospoli Palace, and stopped at the door of the hotel.

Maître Pastrini came to the door to receive his guests.

Franz's first care was to inquire after the count, and to express his regret he had not returned in sufficient time to take him up; but Pastrini reassured him by saying that the Count of Monte-Cristo had ordered a second carriage for himself, and that it had gone at four o'clock to fetch him at the Rospoli Palace. The count had, moreover, charged him to offer the two friends the key of his box at the Argentino. Franz had questioned Albert as to his intentions; but Albert had great projects to put into execution before going to the theatre; and, instead of making any answer, he inquired if Maître Pastrini could procure him a tailor.

"A tailor!" said his host; "and for what?"

"To make us, between now and to-morrow, two costumes of Roman peasants," returned Albert.

The host shook his head. "To make you two costumes between now and to-morrow? I ask your excellency's pardon, but this is a demand quite French; for the next week

you will not find a single tailor who would consent to sew six buttons on a waistcoat if you paid him a crown apiece for each button."

"Then I must give up the idea?"

"No; we have them ready made. Leave all to me; and, to-morrow, when you wake, you shall find a collection of costumes with which you will be satisfied."

"My dear Albert," said Franz, "leave all to our host; he has already proved himself full of resources; let us dine quietly, and afterwards go and see 'L'Italienne à Alger.'"

"Agreed," returned Albert; "but recollect, Maître Pastrini, that both my friend and myself attach the greatest importance to having to-morrow the costumes we have asked for."

The host again assured them that they might rely on him, and that their wishes should be attended to; upon which Franz and Albert mounted to their apartments, and proceeded to disencumber themselves of their costume. Albert, as he took off his dress, carefully preserved the bunch of violets; it was his sign of recognition for the morrow. The two friends sat down to table; but they could not help remarking the difference between the table of the Count of Monte-Cristo and that of Maître Pastrini. Truth compelled Franz, spite of the dislike he seemed to have taken to the count, to confess that the advantage was not on Pastrini's side.

During the dessert the servant inquired at what time they wished for the carriage. Albert and Franz looked at each other, fearing really to abuse the count's kindness. The servant understood them.

"His excellency the Count of Monte-Cristo had," he said, "given positive orders that the carriage was to remain at their lordships' orders all the day, and they could, therefore, dispose of it without fear of indiscretion."

They resolved to profit by the count's courtesy, and ordered the horses to be harnessed, whilst they substituted

an evening costume for that which they had on, and which was somewhat the worse for the numerous combats they had sustained. This precaution taken, they went to the theatre, and installed themselves in the count's box. During the first act, the Countess G—— entered hers. Her first look was at the *loge* where she had seen the count the previous evening, so that she perceived Franz and Albert in the box of the very person concerning whom she had expressed so strange an opinion to Franz. Her opera-glass was so fixedly directed towards them, that Franz saw it would be cruel not to satisfy her curiosity; and availing himself of one of the privileges of the spectators of the Italian theatres, which consists in using their boxes as their drawing-room, the two friends quitted their box to pay their respects to the countess. Scarcely had they entered the *loge*, than she motioned to Franz to assume the seat of honor. Albert, in his turn, sat behind.

"Well," said she, hardly giving Franz time to sit down, "it seems you have nothing better to do than to make the acquaintance of this new Lord Ruthven, and you are the best friends in the world."

"Without being so far advanced as that, madame la comtesse," returned Franz, "I cannot deny we have abused his good nature all day."

"All day?"

"Yes, this morning we breakfasted with him; we rode in his carriage all day, and now we have taken possession of his box."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, and no."

"How so?"

"It is a long story."

"Relate it to me."

"It would frighten you too much."

"Another reason."

"At least wait till the story has a conclusion."

"Very well; I prefer complete histories; but tell me

how you made his acquaintance. Did any one introduce you to him ? ”

“ No ; it was he who introduced himself to us.”

“ When ? ”

“ Last night after we left you.”

“ Through what medium ? ”

“ The very prosaic one of our landlord.”

“ He is staying, then, at the Hôtel de Londres with you ? ”

“ Not only in the same hotel, but on the same floor.”

“ What is his name ; for, of course, you know ? ”

“ The Count of Monte-Cristo.”

“ That is not a family name ? ”

“ No ; it is the name of the isle he has purchased.”

“ And he is a count ? ”

“ A Tuscan count.”

“ Well, we must put up with that,” said the countess, who was herself of one of the oldest families of Venice.

“ What sort of a man is he ? ”

“ Ask the Viscount de Morcerf.”

“ You hear, M. de Morcerf. I am referred to you,” said the countess.

“ We should be very hard to please, madame,” returned Albert, “ did we not think him delightful ; a friend of ten years’ standing could not have done more for us, or with a more perfect courtesy.”

“ Come,” observed the countess, smiling, “ I see my vampire is only some millionaire, who has taken the appearance of Lara in order to avoid being confounded with M. de Rothschild ; and have you seen her ? ”

“ Her ? ”

“ The beautiful Greek of yesterday ? ”

“ No ; we heard, I think, the sound of her *guzla*, but she remained perfectly invisible.”

“ When you say invisible,” interrupted Albert, “ it is only to keep up the mystery ; for whom do you take the blue domino at the window with the white curtains ? ”

"Where was this window with the white hangings?" said the countess.

"At the Rospoli Palace."

"The count had three windows of the Rospoli Palace?"

"Yes. Did you pass through the Rue du Cours?"

"Yes."

"Well, did you remark two windows hung with yellow damask, and one with white damask with a red cross? Those were the count's windows."

"Why, he must be a nabob. Do you know what those three windows were worth?"

"Two or three hundred Roman crowns?"

"Two or three thousand!"

"The devil!"

"Does his isle produce him such a revenue?"

"It does not bring him a bajocco."

"Then why did he purchase it?"

"For a whim."

"He is original, then?"

"In reality," observed Albert, "he seemed to me somewhat eccentric; were he at Paris, and a frequenter of the theatres, I should say he was a poor devil literally mad. This morning he made two or three exits worthy of Didier or Anthony."

At this moment a fresh visitor entered, and, according to the custom, Franz gave up his seat to him. This circumstance had, moreover, the effect of changing the conversation; an hour afterwards the two friends returned to their hotel. Maître Pastrini had already set about procuring their disguise for the morrow; and he assured them they would be perfectly satisfied. The next morning, at nine o'clock, he entered Franz's room, followed by a tailor, who had eight or ten costumes of Roman peasants on his arm; they selected two exactly alike, and charged the tailor to sew on each of their hats about twenty yards of riband, and to procure two of those long silken sashes of different colors with which the lower orders decorate

themselves on *fête* days. Albert was impatient to see how he looked in his new dress; it was a jacket and breeches of blue velvet, silk stockings with clocks, shoes with buckles, and a silk waistcoat. This picturesque attire set him off to great advantage; and when he had bound the scarf around his waist, and when his hat, placed coquettishly on one side, let fall on his shoulders a stream of ribands, Franz was forced to confess that costume has much to do with the physical superiority we accord to some nations. The Turks, who used to be so picturesque with their long and flowing robes, are they not now hideous with their blue frocks buttoned up to the chin, and their red caps, which make them look like a bottle of wine with a red seal? Franz complimented Albert, who looked at himself in the glass with an equivocal smile of satisfaction. They were thus engaged when the Count of Monte-Cristo entered.

"Gentlemen," said he, "although a companion is agreeable, perfect freedom is sometimes still more agreeable. I came to say that to-day, and the remainder of the Carnival, I leave the carriage entirely at your disposal. The host will tell you I have three or four more, so that you do not deprive me in any way of it. Employ it, I pray you, for your pleasure or your business."

The young men wished to decline; but they could find no reason for refusing an offer which was so agreeable to them. The Count of Monte-Cristo remained a quarter of an hour with them, conversing on all subjects with the greatest ease. He was, as we have already said, perfectly well acquainted with the literature of all countries. A glance at the walls of his salon proved to Franz and Albert that he was an amateur of pictures. A few words he let fall showed them he was no stranger to the sciences, and he seemed much occupied with chemistry. The two friends did not venture to return the count the breakfast he had given them; it would have been too absurd to offer him in exchange for his excellent table the very inferior one of Maître Pastrini. They told him so frankly, and he

received their excuses with the air of a man who appreciated their delicacy. Albert was charmed with the count's manners; and he was only prevented from recognizing him for a veritable gentleman by his science. The permission to do what he liked with the carriage pleased him above all; for the fair peasants had appeared in a most elegant carriage the preceding evening, and Albert was not sorry to be upon an equal footing with them. At half-past one they descended; the coachman and footman had put on their livery over their disguise, which gave them a more ridiculous appearance than ever, and which gained them the applause of Franz and Albert. Albert had fastened the faded bunch of violets to his buttonhole. At the first sound of the bell they hastened into the Rue du Cours by the Via Vittoria.

At the second turn, a bunch of fresh violets, thrown from a carriage filled with *paillassines*, indicated to Albert that, like himself and his friend, the peasants had changed their costumes also; and whether it was the result of chance, or whether a similar feeling had possessed them both, whilst he had changed his costume, they had assumed his.

Albert placed the fresh bouquet in his buttonhole; but he kept the faded one in his hand; and when he again met the calash, he raised it to his lips, an action which seemed to amuse not only the fair lady who had thrown it, but her joyous companion also. The day was as gay as the preceding one, perhaps even more animated and noisy; the count appeared for an instant at his window, but when they again repassed, he had disappeared. It is almost needless to say that the flirtation between Albert and the fair peasant continued all day. The evening on his return Franz found a letter from the embassy to inform him he would have the honor of being received by his holiness the next day. At each previous visit he had made to Rome he had solicited and obtained the same favor; and incited as much by a religious feeling as by gratitude, he

was unwilling to quit the capital of the Christian world without laying his respectful homage at the feet of one of St. Peter's successors, who has set the rare example of all virtues. He did not think then of the Carnival; for, in spite of his condescension and touching kindness, one cannot incline one's-self without awe before the venerable and noble old man called Gregory XVI. On his return from the Vatican, Franz carefully avoided the Rue du Cours: he brought away with him a treasure of pious thoughts, to which the mad gaiety of the *mascherata* would have been profanation.

At ten minutes past five Albert entered, overjoyed.

The *paillassine* had reassumed her peasant's costume, and as she passed had raised her mask. She was charming.

Franz congratulated Albert, who received his congratulations with the air of a man conscious they are merited. He had recognized, by certain unmistakable signs, that his fair *incognita* belonged to the aristocracy. He had made up his mind to write to her the next day.

Franz remarked, whilst he gave these details, that Albert seemed to have something to ask of him, and that he was unwilling to ask it. He insisted, declaring beforehand that he was willing to make any sacrifice he required. Albert let himself be pressed just as long as friendship required, and then avowed to Franz that he would do him a great favor by suffering him to occupy the carriage alone the next day.

Albert attributed to Franz's absence the extreme kindness of the fair peasant in raising her mask.

Franz was not sufficiently egotistical to stop Albert in the middle of an adventure that promised to prove so agreeable to his curiosity and so flattering to his vanity.

He felt assured that the perfect indiscretion of his friend would duly inform him of all that happened, and as during three years that he had travelled all over Italy, a similar piece of good fortune had never fallen to his

share, Franz was by no means sorry to learn how to act on such an occasion. He therefore promised Albert that he would content himself the morrow with witnessing the Carnival from the windows of the Rospoli Palace.

The next morning he saw Albert pass and repass. He held an enormous bouquet which he, doubtless, meant to make the bearer of his amorous epistle. This belief was changed into certainty when Franz saw the bouquet (remarkable by a circle of white camellias) in the hand of a charming *paillassine* dressed in rose-colored satin.

The evening was no longer joy, but delirium. Albert nothing doubted that the fair unknown would reply in the same manner. Franz anticipated his wishes by telling him the noise fatigued him, and that he should pass the next day in writing and looking over his journal.

Albert was not deceived; for the next evening Franz saw him enter, shaking triumphantly a folded paper he held by one corner.

"Well," said he, "was I mistaken?"

"She has answered you!" cried Franz.

"Read!"

This word was pronounced in a manner impossible to describe. Franz took the letter and read:

"Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, descend from your carriage opposite the Via dei Pontifici, and follow the Roman peasant who snatches your *moccoletto* from you. When you arrive at the first step of the church of San Giacomo, be sure to fasten a knot of rose-colored ribands to the shoulder of your costume of *paillasse*, in order that you may be recognized. Until then you will not see me. Constancy and Discretion."

"Well," asked he, when Franz had finished, "what do you think of that?"

"I think that the adventure is assuming a very agreeable appearance."

"I think so, also," replied Albert; "and I very much fear you will go alone to the Duke of Bracciano's ball."

Franz and Albert had received that morning an invitation from the celebrated Roman banker.

"Take care, Albert," said Franz. "All the nobility of Rome will be present; and if your fair *incognita* belong to the higher class of society, she must go there."

"Whether she goes there or not, my opinion is still the same," returned Albert. "You have read the letter?"

"Yes."

"You know how imperfectly the women of the *mezzo cito* are educated in Italy?"

(This is the name of the lower class.)

"Yes."

"Well, read the letter again. Look at the writing, and find a fault in the language or orthography."

(The writing was in reality charming, and the orthography irreproachable.)

"You are born to good fortune," said Franz, as he returned the letter.

"Laugh as much as you will," replied Albert, "I am in love."

"You alarm me," cried Franz. "I see that I shall not only go alone to the Duke of Bracciano's, but also return to Florence alone."

"If my unknown be as amiable as she is beautiful," said Albert, "I shall fix myself at Rome for six weeks at least. I adore Rome, and I have always had a great taste for archæology."

"Come, two or three more such adventures, and I do not despair of seeing you a member of the Academy."

Doubtless, Albert was about to discuss seriously his right to the academic chair, when they were informed dinner was ready. Albert's love had not taken away his appetite. He hastened with Franz to seat himself, free to recommence the discussion after dinner.

After dinner the Count of Monte-Cristo was announced. They had not seen him for two days. Maître Pastrini informed them that business had called him to Civita

Vecchia. He had started the previous evening, and had only returned an hour since.

He was charming. Whether he kept a watch over himself, or whether accident did not sound the acrimonious chords that certain circumstances had already touched, he was like everybody else. This man was an enigma to Franz. The count must feel sure he recognized him; and yet he had not let fall a single word that indicated he had seen him anywhere. On his side, however great Franz's desire was to allude to their former interview, the fear of its being disagreeable to the man who had loaded himself and his friends with kindness prevented him from mentioning it.

The count had learned the two friends had sent to secure a box at the Argentino Theatre, and was told they were all let. In consequence he brought then the key of his own — at least such was the apparent motive of his visit.

Franz and Albert made some difficulty, alleging their fear of depriving him of it; but the count replied, that as he was going to the Palli Theatre, the box at the Argentino Theatre would be lost if they did not profit by it. This assurance determined the two friends to accept it.

Franz had become by degrees accustomed to the count's paleness, which had so forcibly struck him the first time he saw him. He could not refrain from admiring the severe beauty of his features, the only defect, or rather the principal quality of which was the pallor. Veritable hero of Byron! Franz could not (we will not say see him, but) even think of him without representing his stern head on the shoulders of Manfred, or beneath the casque of Lara. His forehead was marked by the line that indicates the constant presence of a bitter thought; he had those fiery eyes that seem to penetrate to the heart; and the haughty and disdainful upper lip, that gives to the words it utters a peculiar character that impresses them on the minds of those to whom they are addressed. The count was no longer young. He was at least forty; and yet it was easy

to understand he was formed to rule the young men with whom he associated at present. In reality, to complete his resemblance with the fantastic heroes of the English poet, the count seemed to have the power of fascination.

Albert was constantly expatiating on their good fortune in meeting such a man. Franz was less enthusiastic; but the count exercised over him also the ascendancy a strong mind always acquires. He thought several times of the project the count had of visiting Paris; and he had no doubt but that, with his eccentric character, his characteristic face, and his colossal fortune, he would produce a great effect there. And yet he did not wish to be at Paris when the count was there.

The evening passed as evenings mostly pass at Italian theatres; that is, not in listening to the music, but in paying visits and conversing. The Countess G—— wished to revive the subject of the count, but Franz announced he had something far newer to tell her; and, in spite of Albert's demonstrations of false modesty, he informed the countess of the great event which had preoccupied them for the three last days.

As similar intrigues are not uncommon in Italy, if we may credit travellers, the countess did not manifest the least incredulity, but congratulated Albert on his success. They promised, upon separating, to meet at the Duke of Bracciano's ball, to which all Rome was invited. The heroine of the bouquet kept her word: she gave Albert no sign of her existence the morrow and day after.

At length arrived the Tuesday, the last and most tumultuous day of the Carnival — the Tuesday the theatres open at ten o'clock in the morning, as Lent begins after eight at night; the Tuesday all those who, through want of money, time, or enthusiasm, have not been to see the Carnival before, mingle in the gayety and contribute to the noise and excitement. From two o'clock till five Franz and Albert followed in the *fête*, exchanging handfuls of confetti with the other carriages and the pedestrians, who

crowded among the horses' feet and the carriage-wheels without a single accident, a single dispute, or a single fight.

The *fêtes* are veritable days of pleasure to the Italians. The author of this history, who has resided five or six years in Italy, does not recollect to have ever seen a ceremony interrupted by one of those events so common in other countries.

Albert was triumphant in his costume of *paillasse*. A knot of rose-colored ribands fell from his shoulder almost to the ground. In order that there might be no confusion, Franz wore his peasant's costume.

As the day advanced the tumult became greater. There was not on the pavement, in the carriages, at the windows, a single tongue that was silent, a single arm that did not move. It was a human storm composed of a thunder of cries, and a hail of sweetmeats, flowers, eggs, oranges, and nosegays. At three o'clock the sound of fireworks let off on the Place del Popolo and the Palais de Venise (heard with difficulty amid the din and confusion), announced that the races were about to begin. The races, like the *moccoli*, are one of the episodes peculiar to the last days of the Carnival. At the sound of the fireworks the carriages instantly broke the ranks and retired by the adjacent streets. All these evolutions are executed with an inconceivable address and marvellous rapidity, without the police interfering in the matter.

The pedestrians ranged themselves against the walls; then trampling horses and the clashing of steel were heard. A detachment of carbineers, fifteen abreast, galloped up the Rue du Cours in order to clear it for the *barberi*. When the detachment arrived at the Palais de Venise a second volley of fireworks was again discharged to announce that the street was clear. Almost instantly, in the midst of a tremendous and general outcry, seven or eight horses, excited by the shouts of three hundred thousand spectators, passed by like lightning. Then the Castle of

Saint-Angelo fired three cannons to indicate that number three had won. Immediately, without any other signal, the carriages moved on, flowing on towards the Corso, down all the streets, like torrents pent up for awhile, which again flow into the parent river; and the immense stream again continued its course between its two banks of granite.

A new source of noise and movement was added to the crowd. The sellers of *moccoletti* entered on the scene. The *moccoli*, or *moccoletti*, are candles, which vary in size from the paschal taper to the rushlight, and which cause the actors on the great scene which terminates the Carnival two different sources of thought: 1st. How to preserve their *moccoletto* alight. 2d. How to extinguish the *moccoletto* of others.

The *moccoletto* is like life; man has but one means of transmitting it, and that one comes from God. But he has discovered a thousand means of taking it away, although the devil has somewhat aided him. The *moccoletto* is kindled by approaching it to a light. But who can describe the thousand means of extinguishing the *moccoletto*? — the gigantic bellows, the monstrous extinguishers, the superhuman fans. Every one hastened to purchase *moccoletti*, Franz and Albert among the rest.

The night was rapidly approaching; and already, at the cry of "*Moccoletto!*" repeated by the shrill voices of a thousand vendors, two or three stars began to burn among the crowd. It was the signal. At the end of ten minutes fifty thousand lights glittered, descending from the Palais de Venise to the Place del Popolo, and mounting from the Place del Popolo to the Palais de Venise. It seemed the *fête* of Jack-o'-lanterns. It is impossible to form any idea of it, without having seen it. Suppose all the stars had descended from the sky and mingled in a wild dance on the face of the earth; the whole accompanied by cries that were never heard in any other part of the world. The *facchino* follows the prince, the Transtevere, the citizen,

every one blowing, extinguishing, relighting. Had old Æolus appeared at this moment, he would have been proclaimed king of the *moccoli*, and Aquilo the heir presumptive to the throne.

This flaming race continued for two hours; the Rue du Cours was light as day; the features of the spectators on the third and fourth stories were visible. Every five minutes Albert took out his watch; at length it pointed to seven. The two friends were in the Via dei Pontifici. Albert sprang out, bearing his *moccoletto* in his hand. Two or three masks strove to knock his *moccoletto* out of his hand; but Albert, a first-rate pugilist, sent them rolling in the street one after the other, and continued his course towards the church of San Giacomo. The steps were crowded with masks, who strove to snatch each other's flambeau. Franz followed Albert with his eyes, and saw him mount the first step. Instantly a mask, wearing the well-known costume of a female peasant, snatched his *moccoletto* from him without his offering any resistance. Franz was too far off to hear what they said, but without doubt nothing hostile passed, for he saw Albert disappear arm in arm with the peasant girl.

He watched them pass through the crowd some time, but at length he lost sight of them in the Via Macello. Suddenly the bell that gives the signal for the Carnival sounded, and at the same instant all the *moccoletti* were extinguished as if by enchantment. It seemed as though one immense blast of the wind had extinguished every one. Franz found himself in utter darkness. No sound was audible save that of the carriages that conveyed the masks home; nothing was visible save a few lights that burned behind the windows.

The Carnival was finished.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CATACOMBS OF SAINT SEBASTIAN.

IN his whole life, perhaps, Franz had never before experienced so sudden an impression, so rapid a transition from gayety to sadness, as in this moment. It seemed as though Rome, under the magic breath of some demon of the night, had suddenly changed into a vast tomb. By a chance, which added yet more to the intensity of the darkness, the moon, which was on the wane, did not rise until eleven o'clock, and the streets which the young man traversed were plunged in the deepest obscurity. The distance was short; and at the end of ten minutes his carriage, or rather the count's, stopped before the Hôtel de Londres.

Dinner was waiting; but as Albert had told him he should not return so soon, Franz sat down without him.

Maître Pastrini, who had been accustomed to see them dine together, inquired into the cause of his absence, but Franz merely replied, that Albert had received on the previous evening an invitation which he had accepted. The sudden extinction of the *moccoletti*, the darkness which had replaced the light, the silence which had succeeded the turmoil, had left in Franz's mind a certain depression which was not free from uneasiness. He therefore dined very silently, in spite of the officious attention of his host, who presented himself two or three times to inquire if he wanted anything.

Franz resolved to wait for Albert as late as possible. He ordered the carriage, therefore, for eleven o'clock, desiring Maître Pastrini to inform him the moment Albert

returned to the hotel. At eleven o'clock Albert had not come back. Franz dressed himself and went out, telling his host that he was going to pass the night at the Duke of Bracciano's. The house of the Duke of Bracciano is one of the most delightful in Rome; his lady, one of the last heiresses of the Colonnas, does its honors with the most consummate grace, and thus their *fêtes* have an European celebrity. Franz and Albert had brought to Rome letters of introduction to them; and the first question on Franz's arrival was to ask him where was his travelling companion. Franz replied that he had left him at the moment they were about to extinguish the *moccoli*, and that he had lost sight of him in the Via Macello.

"Then he has not returned?" said the duke.

"I waited for him until this hour," replied Franz.

"And do you know whither he went?"

"No, not precisely: however, I think it was something very like an assignation."

"Diavolo!" said the duke, "this is a bad day, or rather a bad night, to be out late; is it not, countess?"

These words were addressed to the Countess G——, who had just arrived and was leaning on the arm of M. Torlonia, the duke's brother.

"I think, on the contrary, that it is a charming night," replied the countess, "and those who are here will complain of but one thing, that of its too rapid flight."

"I am not speaking," said the duke, with a smile, "of the persons who are here; the men run no other danger than that of falling in love with you, and the women of falling ill of jealousy at seeing you so lovely; I alluded to persons who were out in the streets of Rome."

"Ah!" asked the countess, "who is out in the streets of Rome at this hour unless it be to go to a ball?"

"Our friend Albert de Morcerf, countess, whom I left in pursuit of his unknown about seven o'clock this evening," said Franz, "and whom I have not since seen."

"And don't you know where he is?"

"Not at all."

"Is he armed?"

"He is *en paillasse*."

"You should not have allowed him to go," said the duke to Franz; "you who know Rome better than he does."

"You might as well have tried to stop number three of the *barberi*, who gained the prize in the race to-day," replied Franz; "and then, moreover, what could happen to him?"

"Who can tell? the night is gloomy and the Tiber is very near the Via Macello."

Franz felt a shudder run through his veins at observing the feeling of the duke and countess so much in unison with his personal disquietude.

"I informed them at the hotel that I had the honor of passing the night here, duke," said Franz, "and desired them to come and inform me of his return."

"Ah!" replied the duke, "here, I think, is one of my servants who is seeking you."

The duke was not mistaken; when he saw Franz, the servant came up to him.

"Your excellency," he said, "the master of the Hôtel de Londres has sent to let you know that a man is waiting for you, with a letter from the Viscount de Morcerf."

"A letter from the viscount!" exclaimed Franz.

"Yes."

"And who is the man?"

"I do not know."

"Why did he not bring it to me here?"

"The messenger did not say."

"And where is the messenger?"

"He went away directly he saw me enter the room to find you."

"Oh!" said the countess to Franz, "go with all speed. Poor young man! perhaps some accident has happened to him."

"I will hasten," replied Franz.

"Shall we see you again to give us any information?" inquired the countess.

"Yes, if it is not any serious affair; otherwise I cannot answer as to what I may do myself."

"Be prudent, in any event," said the countess.

"Oh! pray be assured of that."

Franz took his hat and went away in haste. He had sent away his carriage with orders for it to fetch him at two o'clock; fortunately the Palazzo Bracciano, which is on one side of the Rue du Cours and in the other in the Place des Saint Apôtres, is hardly ten minutes' walk from the Hôtel de Londres. As he came near the hotel, Franz saw a man in the centre of the street. He had no doubt that it was the messenger from Albert. The man was wrapped up in a large cloak. He went up to him, but to his extreme astonishment this individual first addressed him.

"What wants your excellency of me?" inquired the man, retreating a step or two as if to keep on his guard.

"Are you not the person who brought me a letter," inquired Franz, "from the Viscount de Morcerf?"

"Your excellency lodges at Pastrini's hotel?"

"I do."

"Your excellency is the travelling companion of the viscount?"

"I am."

"Your excellency's name ——"

"Is the Baron Franz d'Epinaï."

"Then it is to your excellency that his letter is addressed."

"Is there any answer?" inquired Franz, taking the letter from him.

"Yes — your friend at least hopes so."

"Come upstairs with me, and I will give it to you."

"I prefer waiting here," said the messenger, with a smile.

"And why?"

"Your excellency will know when you have read the letter."

"Shall I find you then here?"

"Certainly."

Franz entered the hotel. On the staircase he met Maître Pastrini.

"Well," said the landlord.

"Well — what?" responded Franz.

"You have seen the man who desired to speak with you from your friend?" he asked of Franz.

"Yes, I have seen him," he replied, "and he has handed this letter to me. Light the candle in my apartment, if you please."

The innkeeper gave orders to a servant to go before Franz with a bougie. The young man had found Maître Pastrini looking very much alarmed, and this had only made him the more anxious to read Albert's letter, and thus he went instantly towards the wax-light and unfolded the letter. It was written and signed by Albert. Franz read it twice before he could comprehend what it contained. It was thus conceived:

"MY DEAR FELLOW, — The moment you have received this, have the kindness to take from my pocketbook, which you will find in the square drawer of the secrétaire, the letter of credit; add your own to it, if it be not sufficient. Run to Torlonia, draw from him, instantly, four thousand piastres, and give them to the bearer. It is urgent that I should have this money without delay.

"I do not say more, relying on you as you may rely on me.

Your friend,

"ALBERT DE MORCERF."

"P. S. — I now believe in Italian banditti."

Below these lines were written in a strange hand the following in Italian:

“Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mille piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avra cessato di vivere.

“LUIGI VAMPA.”

“If by six in the morning the four thousand piastres are not in my hands, by seven o'clock the Viscount Albert de Morcerf will have ceased to live.”

This second signature explained all to Franz, who now understood the objection of the messenger to coming up into the apartment; the street was safer for him. Albert, then, had fallen into the hands of the famous chief of banditti in whose existence he had for so long a time refused to believe.

There was no time to lose. He hastened to open the secrétaire, and found the pocketbook in the drawer, and in it the letter of credit. There was in all six thousand piastres, but of these six thousand Albert had already expended three thousand. As to Franz, he had no letter of credit, as he lived at Florence, and had only come to Rome to pass seven or eight days. He had brought but a hundred louis, and of these he had not more than fifty left.

Thus seven or eight hundred piastres were wanting to make up the sum that Albert required. True, he might in such a case rely on the kindness of M. Torlonia.

He was, therefore, about to return to the Palazzo Bracciano without loss of time, when suddenly a luminous idea crossed his mind. He remembered the Count of Monte-Cristo. Franz was about to ring for Maître Pastrini, when that worthy presented himself.

“My dear sir,” he said, hastily, “do you know if the count is within?”

“Yes, your excellency; he has this moment returned.”

“Is he in bed?”

“I should say no.”

"Then ring at his door, if you please, and request him to be so kind as to give me an audience."

Maître Pastrini did as he was desired, and returning five minutes after, he said :

"The count awaits your excellency."

Franz went along the corridor, and a servant introduced him to the count. He was in a small cabinet which Franz had not yet seen, and which was surrounded with divans. The count came towards him.

"Well, what good wind blows you hither at this hour?" said he; "have you come to sup with me? it would be very kind of you."

"No, I have come to speak to you of a very serious matter."

"A serious matter!" said the count, looking at Franz with the earnestness usual to him; "and what may it be?"

"Are we alone?"

"Yes," replied the count, going to the door and returning. Franz gave him Albert's letter.

"Read that," he said. The count read it.

"Ah! ah!" said he.

"Did you see the postscript?"

"I did, indeed."

"Se alle sei della mattina le quattro mille piastre non sono nelle mie mani, alle sette il Conte Alberto avra cessato di vivere.

"LUIGI VAMPA."

"What think you of that?" inquired Franz.

"Have you the money he demanded?"

"Yes, all but eight hundred piastres."

The count went to his secrétaire, opened it, and pulling out a drawer filled with gold, said to Franz:

"I hope you will not offend me by applying to any one but myself."

"You see, on the contrary, I come to you first and instantly," replied Franz.

"And I thank you; have what you will;" and he made a sign to Franz to take what he pleased.

"Is it absolutely necessary, then, to send the money to Luigi Vampa?" asked the young man, looking fixedly in his turn at the count.

"Judge yourself," replied he. "The postscript is explicit."

"I think if you would take the trouble of reflecting, you could find a way of simplifying the negotiation," said Franz.

"How so?" returned the count, with surprise.

"If we were to go together to Luigi Vampa, I am sure he would not refuse you Albert's freedom."

"What influence can I possibly have over a bandit?"

"Have you not just rendered him one of those services that are never forgotten?"

"What is that?"

"Have you not saved Peppino's life?"

"Ah! ah!" said the count, "who told you that?"

"No matter, I know it."

The count knit his brows and remained silent an instant.

"And if I went to seek Vampa, would you accompany me?"

"If my society would not be disagreeable."

"Be it so; it is a lovely night, and a walk outside of Rome will do us both good."

"Shall I take my arms?"

"For what purpose?"

"Any money?"

"It is useless. Where is the man who brought the letter?"

"In the street."

"He waits the answer?"

"Yes."

"I must learn where we are going. I will summon him hither."

"It is useless, he would not come up."

"To your apartments, perhaps; but he will not make any difficulty in entering mine."

The count went to the window of the apartment that looked on to the street, and whistled in a peculiar manner. The man in the mantle quitted the wall, and advanced into the centre of the street.

"*Salute!*" said the count, in the same tone in which he would have given an order to his servant. The messenger obeyed, without the least hesitation, but rather with alacrity, and mounting the steps of the passage at a bound, entered the hotel; five seconds afterwards he was at the door of the cabinet.

"Ah! it is you, Peppino," said the count.

But Peppino, instead of answering, threw himself on his knees, seized the count's hand, and covered it with kisses.

"Ah!" said the count, "you have, then, not forgotten that I saved your life; that is strange, for it is a week ago."

"No, excellency, and I never shall forget it," returned Peppino, with an accent of profound gratitude.

"Never! that is a long time; but it is something that you believe so. Rise and answer."

Peppino glanced anxiously at Franz.

"Oh, you may speak before his excellency," said he. "He is one of my friends. You allow me to give you this title," continued the count in French; "it is necessary to excite this man's confidence."

"You can speak before me," said Franz. "I am a friend of the count's."

"Good," returned Peppino; "I am ready to answer any questions your excellency may address to me."

"How did the Viscount Albert fall into Luigi's hands?"

"Excellency, the Frenchman's carriage passed several times the one in which was Teresa."

"The chief's mistress?"

"Yes; the Frenchman threw her a bouquet, Teresa returned it; all this with the consent of the chief, who was in the carriage."

"What!" cried Franz, "was Luigi Vampa in the carriage with the Roman peasants?"

"It was he who drove, disguised as a coachman," replied Peppino.

"Well?" said the count.

"Well, then the Frenchman took off his mask. Teresa, with the chief's consent, did the same. The Frenchman asked for a rendezvous; Teresa gave him one; only instead of Teresa it was Beppo who was on the steps of San Giacomo."

"What!" exclaimed Franz, "the peasant girl who snatched his *mocolletto* from him——"

"Was a lad of fifteen," replied Peppino; "but it was no disgrace to your friend to have been deceived. Beppo has taken in plenty of others."

"And Beppo led him outside the walls?" said the count.

"Exactly so; a carriage was waiting at the end of Via Macello. Beppo got in, inviting the Frenchman to follow him, and he did not wait to be asked twice. He gallantly offered the right-hand seat to Beppo, and sat by him. Beppo told him he was going to take him to a villa, a league from Rome; the Frenchman assured him he would follow him to the end of the world. The coachman went up the Rue di Ripetta and the Porte San Paolo; and when they were two hundred yards outside, as the Frenchman became somewhat too forward, Beppo put a brace of pistols to his head; the coachman pulled up and did the same. At the same time four of the band, who were concealed on the banks of the Almo, surrounded the carriage. The Frenchman made some resistance, and nearly strangled Beppo; but he could not resist five armed men, and was forced to yield; they made him get out, walk along

the banks of the river, and then brought him to Teresa and Luigi, who were waiting for him in the Catacombs of Saint Sebastian."

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "it seems to me that this is a very likely story. What do you say to it?"

"Why, that I should think it very amusing," replied Franz, "if it had happened to any one but poor Albert."

"And, in truth, if you had not found me here," said the count, "it might have proved a gallant adventure which would have cost your friend dear; but now, be assured, his alarm will be the only serious consequence."

"And shall we go and find him?" inquired Franz.

"Oh, decidedly, sir! he is in a very picturesque place. Do you know the Catacombs of St. Sebastian?"

"I was never in them, but I have often resolved to visit them."

"Well, here is an opportunity made to your hand, and it would be difficult to contrive a better. Have you a carriage?"

"No."

"That is of no consequence; I always have one ready, day and night."

"Always ready?"

"Yes; I am a very capricious being, and I should tell you that sometimes when I rise, or after my dinner, or in the middle of the night, I resolve on starting for some particular point, and away I go."

The count rang, and a footman appeared.

"Order out the carriage," he said, "and remove the pistols which are in the holsters. You need not awaken the coachman. Ali will drive."

In a very short time the noise of wheels was heard, and the carriage stopped at the door. The count took out his watch.

"Half-past twelve," he said; "we might start at five o'clock and be in time, but the delay might cause our

friend to pass an uneasy night; and, therefore, we had better go with all speed to extricate him from the hands of the infidels. Are you still resolved to accompany me?"

"More determined than ever."

"Well, then, come along."

Franz and the count went downstairs, accompanied by Peppino. At the door they found the carriage. Ali was on the box, in whom Franz recognized the dumb slave of the grotto of Monte-Cristo. Franz and the count got into the carriage. Peppino placed himself beside Ali, and they set off at a rapid pace. Ali had received his instructions, and went down the Rue du Cours, crossed the Campo Vaccino, went up the Strada San Gregorio, and reached the gates of Saint Sebastian; then the porter raised some difficulties; but the Count of Monte-Cristo produced an authority from the governor of Rome to quit or enter the city at any and all hours of the day or night; the portecullis was therefore raised, the porter had a louis for his trouble, and they went on their way. The road which the carriage now traversed was the ancient Appian Way, and bordered with tombs. From time to time, by the light of the moon which began to rise, Franz imagined that he saw something like a sentinel appear from various points of the ruin, and suddenly retreat into the darkness on a signal from Peppino.

A short time before they reached the Circus of Caracalla the carriage stopped, Peppino opened the door, and the count and Franz alighted.

"In ten minutes," said the count to his companion, "we shall arrive there."

He then took Peppino aside, gave him some order in a low voice, and Peppino went away, taking with him a torch, brought with them in the carriage. Five minutes elapsed, during which Franz saw the shepherd advance along a narrow path in the midst of the irregular ground which forms the convulsed soil of the plain of Rome, and

disappear in the midst of the high red herbage, which seemed like the bristling mane of some enormous lion.

"Now," said the count, "let us follow him."

Franz and the count in their turn then advanced along the same path, which, at the end of a hundred paces, led them by a declivity to the bottom of a small alley. They then perceived two men conversing in the shade.

"Ought we to advance?" asked Franz of the count; "or should we pause?"

"Let us go on; Peppino will have warned the sentry of our coming."

One of these two men was Peppino, and the other a bandit on the lookout. Franz and the count advanced, and the bandit saluted them.

"Your excellency," said Peppino, addressing the count, "if you will follow me, the opening of the catacombs is close at hand."

"Go on, then," replied the count.

They came to an opening behind a clump of bushes and in the midst of a pile of rocks by which a man could scarcely pass. Peppino glided first into this crevice, but after advancing a few paces the passage widened. Then he paused, lighted his torch, and turned around to see if they came after him. The count first reached a kind of square space, and Franz followed him closely. The earth sloped in a gentle descent, enlarging as they proceeded; still Franz and the count were compelled to advance stooping and scarcely able to proceed two abreast. They went on a hundred and fifty paces thus, and then were stopped by "Who goes there?"

At the same time they saw the reflection of a torch on the barrel of a carbine.

"A friend!" responded Peppino, and advancing alone towards the sentry, he said a few words to him in a low tone, and then he, like the first, saluted the nocturnal visitors, making a sign that they might proceed.

Behind the sentinel was a staircase with twenty steps.

Franz and the count descended these, and found themselves in a kind of cross-roads, forming a burial-ground. Five roads diverged like the rays of a star, and the wall, dug into niches, placed one above the other in the shape of coffins, showed that they were at last in the catacombs. In one of the cavities, whose extent it was impossible to determine, some rays of light were visible. The count laid his hand on Franz's shoulder.

"Would you like to see a camp of bandits in repose?" he inquired.

"Exceedingly," replied Franz.

"Come with me, then. Peppino, extinguish the torch."

Peppino obeyed, and Franz and the count were suddenly in utter darkness; only fifty paces in advance of them there played along the wall some reddish beams of light, more visible since Peppino had put out his torch. They advanced silently, the count guiding Franz as if he had the singular faculty of seeing in the dark. Franz himself, however, distinguished his way more plainly in proportion as he advanced towards the rays of light which served them for guides—three arcades, of which the middle served as the door, offered themselves. These arcades opened on one side of the corridor in which were the count and Franz, and on the other, to a large square chamber, entirely surrounded by niches similar to those of which we have spoken. In the midst of the chamber were four stones, which had formerly served as an altar, as was evident from the cross which still surmounted them. A lamp placed at the base of a pillar lighted up with its pale and flickering flame the singular scene which presented itself to the eyes of the two visitors concealed in the shadow. A man was seated with his elbow leaning on the column, and was reading, with his back turned to the arcades, through the openings of which the newcomers contemplated him. This was the chief of the band, Luigi Vampa. Around him, and in groups, according to their fancy, lying in their mantles, or with their backs against a

kind of stone bench which went all around the columbarium, were to be seen twenty brigands or more, each having his carbine within reach. At the bottom, silent, scarcely visible, and like a shadow, was a sentinel, who was walking up and down before a kind of opening, which was only distinguishable because in that spot the darkness seemed thicker. When the count thought Franz had gazed sufficiently on this picturesque tableau, he raised his finger to his lips, to warn him to be silent, and ascending the three steps which led to the corridor of the columbarium, entered the chamber by the centre arcade, and advanced towards Vampa, who was so intent on the book before him that he did not hear the noise of his footsteps.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel, less occupied, and who saw by the lamp's light a shadow which approached his chief.

At this moment Vampa rose quickly, drawing at the same moment a pistol from his girdle. In a moment all the bandits were on their feet, and twenty carbines were levelled at the count.

"Well," said he, in a voice perfectly calm, and no muscle of his countenance disturbed, "Well, my dear Vampa, it appears to me that you receive a friend with a great deal of ceremony!"

"Ground arms!" exclaimed the chief, with an imperative sign of the hand, whilst with the other he took off his hat respectfully; then turning to the singular personage who had caused this scene, he said: "Your pardon, M. le comte, but I was so far from expecting the honor of a visit, that I did not really recognize you."

"It seems that your memory is equally short in everything, Vampa," said the count, "and that not only do you forget people's faces, but also the conditions you make with them."

"What conditions have I forgotten, M. le comte?" inquired the bandit, with the air of a man who, having committed an error, is anxious to repair it.

"Was it not agreed," asked the count, "that not only my person, but also that of my friends, should be respected by you?"

"And how have I broken that treaty, your excellency?"

"You have this evening carried off and conveyed hither the Viscount Albert de Morcerf. Well," continued the count, in a tone that made Franz shudder, "this young gentleman is one of *my friends* — this young gentleman lodges in the same hotel as myself — this young gentleman has been up and down the Corso for eight hours in my private carriage, and yet, I repeat to you, you have carried him off, and conveyed him hither, and," added the count, taking the letter from his pocket, "you have set a ransom on him as if he were an indifferent person."

"Why did you not tell me all this, you?" inquired the brigand chief, turning towards his men, who all retreated before his look. "Why have you exposed me thus to fail in my word towards a gentleman like the count, who has all our lives in his hands? By heavens! if I thought one of you knew that the young gentleman was the friend of his excellency, I would blow his brains out with my own hand!"

"Well," said the count, turning towards Franz, "I told you there was some mistake in this."

"Are you not alone?" asked Vampa, with uneasiness.

"I am with the person to whom this letter was addressed, and to whom I desired to prove that Luigi Vampa was a man of his word. — Come, your excellency, here is Luigi Vampa, who will himself express to you his deep regret at the mistake he has committed."

Franz approached, the chief advancing several steps to meet him.

"Welcome amongst us, your excellency," he said to him; "you heard what the count just said, and also my reply; let me add that I would not for the four thousand piastres at which I had fixed your friend's ransom that this had happened."

"But," said Franz, looking around him uneasily, "where is the viscount? I do not see him."

"Nothing has happened to him, I hope?" said the count, frowningly.

"The prisoner is there," replied Vampa, pointing to the hollow place in front of which the bandit was on guard, "and I will go myself and tell him he is free."

The chief went towards the place he had pointed out as Albert's prison, and Franz and the count followed him.

"What is the prisoner doing?" inquired Vampa of the sentinel.

"*Ma foi!* captain," replied the sentry, "I do not know; for the last hour I have not heard him stir."

"Come in, your excellency," said Vampa.

The count and Franz ascended seven or eight steps after the chief, who drew back a bolt and opened a door. Then, by the gleam of a lamp similar to that which lighted the columbarium, Albert was to be seen wrapped up in a cloak which one of the bandits had lent him, lying in a corner in profound slumber.

"Come!" said the count, smiling with his own peculiar smile, "not so bad for a man who is to be shot at seven o'clock to-morrow morning!"

Vampa looked at Albert with a kind of admiration; he was not insensible to such a proof of courage.

"You are right, M. le comte," he said; "this must be one of your friends."

Then, going to Albert, he touched him on the shoulder, saying:

"Will your excellency please to awaken?"

Albert stretched out his arms, rubbed his eyelids, and opened his eyes.

"Ah! ah!" said he, "is it you, captain? You should have allowed me to have slept. I had such a delightful dream; I was dancing the galop at Torlonia's with the Countess G——."

Then he drew from his pocket his watch, which he had preserved that he might see how time sped.

"Half-past one only," said he. "Why the devil do you rouse me at this hour?"

"To tell you that you are free, your excellency."

"My dear fellow," replied Albert, with perfect ease of mind, "remember for the future Napoleon's maxim, 'Never awaken me but for bad news:' if you had let me sleep on I should have finished my galop, and have been grateful to you all my life. So, then, they have paid my ransom?"

"No, your excellency!"

"Well, then, how am I free?"

"A person to whom I can refuse nothing has come to demand you."

"Come hither?"

"Yes, hither."

"Really! then that person is a most amiable person."

Albert looked around, and perceived Franz.

"What!" said he, "is it you, my dear Franz, whose devotion and friendship are thus displayed?"

"No, not I," replied Franz, "but our neighbor, the Count of Monte-Cristo."

"Ah! ah! M. le comte," said Albert, gaily arranging his cravat and wristbands, "you are really most kind, and I hope you will consider me as your eternally obliged, in the first place for the carriage, and in the next for this!" and he put out his hand to the count, who shuddered as he gave his own, but who nevertheless did give it.

The bandit gazed on this scene with amazement; he was evidently accustomed to see his prisoners tremble before him, and yet here was one whose gay temperament was not for a moment altered; as for Franz, he was enchanted at the way in which Albert sustained the national honor in the presence of the bandit.

"My dear Albert," he said, "if you will make haste, we shall yet have time to finish the night at Torlonia's. You may conclude your interrupted galop, so that you will owe

no ill-will to Signor Luigi, who has, indeed, throughout this whole affair acted like a gentleman."

"You are decidedly right; and we may reach the Palazzo at two o'clock. Signor Luigi," continued Albert, "is there any formality to fulfil before I take leave of your excellency?"

"None, sir," replied the bandit; "you are as free as air."

"Well, then, a happy and merry life to you. Come, gentlemen, come!"

And Albert, followed by Franz and the count, descended the staircase, crossed the square chamber, where stood all the bandits, hat in hand.

"Peppino," said the brigand chief, "give me the torch."

"What are you going to do then?" inquired the count.

"I will show you the way back myself," said the captain; "that is the least honor I can testify to your excellency."

And taking the lighted torch from the hand of the herdsman, he preceded his guests, not as a servant who performs an act of servility, but like a king who precedes ambassadors. On reaching the door, he bowed.

"And now, M. le comte," added he, "allow me to repeat my apologies, and I hope you will not entertain any resentment at what has occurred."

"No, my dear Vampa," replied the count; "besides, you compensate for your mistakes in so gentlemanly a way that one almost feels obliged to you for having committed them."

"Gentlemen!" added the chief, turning towards the young men, "perhaps the offer may not appear very tempting to you, but if you should ever feel inclined to pay me a second visit, wherever I may be, you shall be welcome."

Franz and Albert bowed.

The count went out first, then Albert; Franz paused for a moment.

"Has your excellency anything to ask me?" said Vampa, with a smile.

"Yes, I have," replied Franz. "I am curious to know what work you were perusing with so much attention as we entered?"

"'Cæsar's Commentaries,'" said the bandit; "it is my favorite work."

"Well, are you coming?" asked Albert.

"Yes," replied Franz, "here I am!" and he in his turn left the caves.

They advanced to the plain.

"Ah, your pardon!" said Albert, turning around; "will you allow me, captain?"

And he lighted his cigar at Vampa's torch.

"Now, M. le comte," he said, "let us go on with all the speed we may. I am enormously anxious to finish my night at the Duke of Bracciano's."

They found the carriage where they had left it. The count said a word in Arabic to Ali, and the horses went off at great speed.

It was just two o'clock by Albert's watch when the two friends entered the dancing-room.

Their return was quite an event, but as they entered together, all uneasiness on Albert's account ceased instantly.

"Madame," said the Viscount de Morcerf, advancing towards the countess, "yesterday you were so condescending as to promise me a galop; I am rather late in claiming this gracious promise, but here is my friend, whose character for veracity you well know, and he will assure you the delay arose from no fault of mine."

And as at this moment the music gave the warning for the waltz, Albert put his arm around the waist of the countess, and disappeared with her in the whirl of dancers. In the meanwhile Franz was considering the singular shudder that pervaded the Count of Monte-Cristo's frame at the moment when he had been, in some sort, forced to give his hand to Albert.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

ALBERT's first words to his friend, on the following morning, contained a request that he would accompany him to visit the count; true, he had warmly and energetically thanked him the previous evening, but services such as he had rendered could never be too often acknowledged.

Franz, who seemed attracted by some invisible influence towards the count, in which terror was strangely mingled, felt an extreme reluctance to permit his friend to be exposed alone to the singular fascinations the mysterious count seemed to exercise over him, and, therefore, made no objection to Albert's request, but at once accompanied him to the desired spot, and, after a short delay, the count joined them in the salon.

"M. le comte," said Albert, advancing to meet him, "permit me to repeat the poor thanks I offered last night, to assure you that the remembrance of all I owe you will never be effaced from my memory; believe me, while I have life I shall never cease to dwell with grateful recollection on the prompt and important service you rendered me; as also to remember that to you I am indebted even for my life."

"My dear friend and excellent neighbor," replied the count, with a smile, "you really exaggerate my trifling exertions. You owe me nothing but some trifle of 20,000 francs, which you have been saved out of your travelling expenses, so that there is not much of a score

between us; but you must really permit me to congratulate you on the ease and unconcern with which you resigned yourself to your fate, and the perfect indifference you manifested as to the turn events might take."

"Upon my word," said Albert, "I deserve no credit for what I could not help, namely, a determination to take everything as I found it; and to let those bandits see, that although men get into troublesome scrapes all over the world, there is no nation but the French can smile even in the face of grim Death himself. All that, however, has nothing to do with my obligations to you, and I now come to ask you, whether, in my own person, my family, or connections, I can in any way serve you? My father, the Comte de Morcerf, although of Spanish origin, possesses considerable influence, both at the court of France and Madrid, and I unhesitatingly place the best services of myself, and all to whom my life is dear, at your disposal."

"M. de Morcerf," replied the count, "your offer, far from surprising me, is precisely what I expected from you, and I accept it in the same spirit of hearty sincerity with which it is made; nay, I will go still further and say that I had previously made up my mind to ask a great favor at your hands."

"Oh, pray name it."

"I am wholly a stranger to Paris—it is a city I have never yet seen."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Albert, "that you have reached your present age without visiting the finest capital in the world? I can scarcely credit it."

"Nevertheless, it is quite true; still I agree with you in thinking that my present ignorance of the first city in Europe is a reproach to me in every way, and calls for immediate correction; but in all probability I should have performed so important, so necessary a duty, as that of making myself acquainted with the wonders and beauties of your justly celebrated capital, had I known any person who would have introduced me into the fashionable world,

but unfortunately I possessed no acquaintance there, and, of necessity, was compelled to abandon the idea."

"So distinguished an individual as yourself," cried Albert, "could scarcely have required an introduction."

"You are most kind; but, as regards myself, I can find no merit I possess save that as a millionaire. I might have become a partner in the speculations of M. Aguado and M. Rothschild; but as my motive in travelling to your capital would have been for the pleasure of dabbling in the funds, I stayed away till some favorable chance should present itself of carrying my wish into execution: your offer, however, smooths all difficulties, and I have only to ask you, my dear M. de Morcerf" (these words were accompanied by a most peculiar smile), "whether you undertake, upon my arrival in France, to open to me the doors of that fashionable world, of which I know no more than a Huron or native of Cochin-China?"

"Oh, that I do, and with infinite pleasure!" answered Albert; "and so much more readily, as a letter received this morning from my father summons me to Paris in consequence of a treaty of marriage (my dear Franz, do not smile, I beg of you) with a family of high standing, and connected with the very *élite* of Parisian society."

"Connected by marriage, you mean," said Franz, laughingly.

"Well, never mind how it is," answered Albert, "it comes to the same thing in the end. Perhaps, by the time you return to Paris, I shall be quite a sober, staid father of a family! A most edifying representative I shall make of all the domestic virtues—don't you think so? But as regards your wish to visit our fine city, my dear count, I can only say that you may command me and mine to any extent you please."

"Then it is a settled affair," said the count; "and I give you my solemn assurance that I only waited an opportunity like the present to realize schemes I have long meditated."

Franz doubted not that these schemes were the same concerning which he had dropped some words in the grotto of Monte-Cristo; and while the count gave utterance to the expression, the young man closely examined his features in the hopes that some powerful emotion might render the nature of these projects easily traced upon his expressive countenance; but it was altogether impossible to read the thoughts of the mysterious individual before him, especially when he employed one of those bewildering smiles he so well knew how to call up.

"But tell me now, count," exclaimed Albert, delighted at the idea of having to chaperon so distinguished a person as Monte-Cristo; "tell me truly whether you are in earnest, or if this project of visiting Paris is merely one of those chimerical and uncertain things of which we make so many in the course of our lives; but which, like a house built on the sand, is liable to be blown over by the first puff of wind?"

"I pledge you my honor," returned the count, "that I mean to do as I have said; both inclination and positive necessity compel me to visit Paris!"

"When do you purpose going thither?"

"Have you made up your mind when you shall be there yourself?"

"Certainly I have; in a fortnight or three weeks' time; that is to say, as fast as I can get there!"

"Nay," said the count; "I will give you three months ere I join you; you see I make an ample allowance for all delays and difficulties."

"And in three months' time," said Albert, "you will be at my house?"

"Shall we make a positive appointment for a particular day and hour?" inquired the count; "only let me warn you that I am proverbial for my punctilious exactitude in keeping my engagements."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Albert; "yes, by all

means let us have this rendezvous duly drawn up and attested."

"So be it, then," replied the count, and extending his hand towards an almanac, suspended near the chimney-piece, he said, "to-day is the 21st of February," and drawing out his watch, added, "it is exactly half-past ten o'clock. Now promise me to remember this, and expect me the 21st of May at the same hour in the forenoon."

"Capital!" exclaimed Albert; "and you shall find everything and everybody ready to receive you. I take upon myself to promise that your breakfast shall be smoking hot awaiting your arrival."

"Where do you live?"

"No. 27 Rue du Helder!"

"Have you bachelor's apartments there? I hope my coming will not put you to any inconvenience."

"I reside in my father's hôtel, but occupy a pavilion at the farther side of the courtyard, entirely separated from the main building."

"Quite sufficient," replied the count, as, taking out his tablets, he wrote down, "No. 27 Rue du Helder, 21st May, half-past ten in the morning." "Now, then," said the count, returning his tablets to his pocket, "make yourself perfectly easy; the hand of your time-piece will not be more accurate in marking the time than myself."

"Shall I see you again ere my departure?" asked Albert.

"That will be according to circumstances; but when do you set off?"

"To-morrow evening, at five o'clock."

"In that case I must say adieu to you, as I am compelled to go to Naples, and shall not return hither before Saturday evening or Sunday morning. And you, M. le baron," pursued the count, addressing Franz, "do you also depart to-morrow?"

"Yes, I go, also."

"And whither do you wend your way — to Paris?"

"No, to Venice; I shall remain in Italy for another year or two."

"Then we shall not meet in Paris?"

"I fear I shall not have that honor."

"Well, since we must part," said the count, holding out a hand to each of the young men, "allow me to wish you both a safe and pleasant journey."

It was the first time the hand of Franz had come in contact with that of the mysterious individual before him, and, unconsciously, he shuddered at its touch, for it felt cold and icy as that of a corpse.

"Let us understand each other," said Albert: "it is agreed — is it not? — that you are to be in the Rue du Helder on the 21st of May, at half-past ten in the morning, and your word of honor passed for your punctuality."

"All that is settled and arranged upon honor," replied the count; "rely upon seeing me at the time and place agreed on."

The young men then rose, and, courteously bowing to their singular acquaintance, quitted the room.

"What is the matter?" asked Albert of Franz, when they had returned to their own apartments; "you seem more than commonly thoughtful."

"I will confess to you, Albert," replied Franz, "that I am deeply puzzled to unravel the real character of this strange count; and the appointment you have made to meet him in Paris fills me with a thousand apprehensions."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Albert, "what can there possibly be in that to excite uneasiness? Why, you must have lost your senses to imagine either harm or danger can spring from it!"

"Whether I am in my senses or not," answered Franz, "such is my view of the evil effects that may arise from a second meeting with this incomprehensible count, that I would give much had you not crossed his path."

"Listen to me, Franz," said Albert. "I am not sorry

that our present conversation gives me an opportunity of remarking to you how much I have been struck with the difference of your manner towards the count to that with which you treat your friends in general; to him you are frigid and polite, while to myself, for instance, you are warm and cordial as a friend should be; have you any private reasons for so acting?"

"Possibly."

"Did you ever meet him previously to coming hither?"

"I have."

"And where?"

"Will you promise me not to repeat a single word of what I am about to tell you?"

"I promise you to observe the utmost secrecy."

"And you pledge me your honor that nothing shall induce you to divulge it?"

"I pledge my honor."

"Then listen to me."

Franz then related to his friend the history of his excursion to the Isle of Monte-Cristo, and of his finding a party of smugglers there, with whom were two Corsican bandits; he dwelt with considerable force and energy on the almost magical hospitality he had received from the count, and the magnificence of his entertainment in the grotto of the *Thousand and One Nights*; he recounted with circumstantial exactitude all particulars of the supper; the hashish, the statues, the dream, and reality, and how, at his awakening, there remained no proof or trace of all these events, save the small yacht, seen in the distant horizon hastening with spread sails towards Porto-Vecchio. Then he detailed the conversation overheard by him at the Colosseum, between the mysterious visitant and Vampa, in which the count had promised to obtain the release of the bandit Peppino—an engagement which, as our readers are aware, he most faithfully fulfilled.

At last he arrived at the adventure of the preceding night; and the embarrassment in which he found himself

placed, by not having sufficient cash to complete the sum of 600 or 700 piastres, with the circumstance of his having applied to the count to furnish the money in which he was deficient, an impulse which had led to results so picturesque and satisfactory. Albert listened with the most profound attention.

"Well," said he, when Franz had concluded, "what do you find to object to in all you have related? The count is fond of travelling, and being rich, possesses a vessel of his own. Go but to Portsmouth or Southampton, and you will find the harbors crowded with the yachts belonging to such of the English as can afford the expense, and have the same liking for this amusement as your mysterious acquaintance of the Isle of Monte-Cristo. Now, by way of having a resting-place during his excursions, avoiding the wretched cookery which has been trying its best to poison me during the last four months, while you have manfully resisted its effects for as many years, and obtaining a bed on which it is impossible to slumber, Monte-Cristo has furnished for himself a temporary abode where you first found him; but, to prevent the possibility of the Tuscan government taking a fancy to his enchanted palace, and thereby depriving him of the advantages naturally expected from so large an outlay of capital, he has wisely enough purchased the island, and assumed the title of its count. Just ask yourself, my good fellow, whether there are not many persons of our acquaintance who assume the names of lands and properties they never in their lives were master of?"

"But," said Franz, "how do you account for the circumstance of the Corsican bandits being among the crew of the vessel?"

"Why, really, the thing seems simple enough. Nobody knows better than yourself that the bandits of Corsica are not rogues or thieves, but purely and simply fugitives driven by some sinister motive from their native town or village, and that their fellowship involves no disgrace or

stigma; for my own part, I protest that, should I ever visit Corsica, my first visit, ere ever I presented myself to the mayor or *préfet*, should be to the bandits of Colombo, if I could only manage to find them; for, on my conscience, they are a race of men I admire greatly."

"Still," persisted Franz, "I suppose you will allow that such men as Vampa and his band are regular villains, who have no other motive than plunder when they seize your person. How do you explain the influence the count evidently possessed over those ruffians?"

"My good friend, as in all probability I owe my present safety to that influence, it would ill become me to search too closely into its source; therefore, instead of condemning him for his intimacy with outlaws, you must give me leave to excuse any little irregularity there may be in such a connection; not altogether for preserving my life, for my own idea is that it never was in much danger; but certainly for saving me 4,000 piastres, which, being translated, means neither more nor less than 24,000 livres of our money — a sum at which, most assuredly, I should never have been estimated in France; proving most indisputably," added Albert, with a laugh, "that no prophet is honored in his own country."

"Talking of countries," replied Franz, "can you tell me what country produced this mysterious person, what is his native tongue, his means of existence, and from whence does he derive his immense fortune, and what were those events of his early life — a life as marvellous as unknown — that have tinctured his succeeding years with so dark and gloomy a misanthropy? Certainly these are questions that, in your place, I should like to have answered."

"My dear Franz," replied Albert, "when upon receipt of my letter, you found the necessity of asking the count's assistance, you promptly went to him, saying, 'My friend Albert de Morcerf is in danger; help me to deliver him.' Was not that nearly what you said?"

"It was."

"Well, then, did he ask you, Who is M. Albert de Morcerf? how does he come by his name — his fortune? what are his means of existence? what is his birthplace? of what country is he a native? Tell me, did he put all these questions to you?"

"I confess he asked me none."

"No; he merely came and freed me from the hands of Signor Vampa, where, I can assure you, in spite of all my outward appearance of ease and unconcern, I did not very particularly care to remain. Now, then, Franz, when, in return for services so promptly and unhesitatingly rendered, he but asks me in return to do for him what is done daily for any Russian prince or Italian noble who may pass through Paris — merely to introduce him into society — would you have me refuse? My good fellow, you must have lost your senses to think it possible I could act with such cold-blooded policy."

And this time it must be confessed that, in direct opposition to the ordinary discussions between the young men, all the good and powerful reasons were on Albert's side.

"Well!" said Franz, with a sigh, "do as you please, my dear viscount, for your arguments are beyond my powers of refutation. Still, in spite of all, you must admit that this Count of Monte-Cristo is a most singular personage."

"He is a philanthropist," answered the other; "and, no doubt, his motive in visiting Paris is to compete for the Monthyon prize, given, as you are aware, to whoever shall be proved to have most materially advanced the interests of virtue and humanity. If my vote and interest can obtain it for him, I will readily give him the one and promise him the other. And now, my dear Franz, let us talk of something else. Come, shall we take our luncheon, and then pay a last visit to Saint Peter's?"

Franz silently assented, and the following afternoon, at half-past five o'clock, the young men parted, Albert de Morcerf to return to Paris, and Franz d'Epinay to pass a fortnight at Venice. But ere he entered his travelling-

carriage, Albert, in the fear of his expected guest forgetting the engagement he had entered into, placed in the care of the waiter of the hotel a card to be delivered to the Count of Monte-Cristo, on which, beneath the name of Albert de Morcerf, he had written in pencil:

“7 Rue du Helder, on the 21st of May, half-past 10 A. M.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE GUESTS.

IN the house in the Rue du Helder, where Albert had invited the Count of Monte-Cristo, everything was being prepared on the morning of the 21st of May to fulfil the engagement.

Albert de Morcerf inhabited a pavilion situated at the corner of a large court, and directly opposite another building, in which were the servants' apartments. Two windows only of the pavilion faced the street; three other windows looked into the court, and two at the back into the garden. Between the court and the garden, built in the heavy style of the imperial architecture, was the large and fashionable dwelling of the Count and Countess de Morcerf. A high wall surrounded the whole of the hotel, surmounted at intervals by vases filled with flowers, and broken in the centre by a large gate of gilt iron, which served as the carriage entrance.

A small door, close to the lodge of the concierge, gave ingress and egress to the servants and masters when they were on foot.

It was easy to discover that the delicate care of a mother, unwilling to part from her son, and yet aware he required the full exercise of his liberty, had chosen this habitation for Albert. On the other hand was visible the intelligent independence of youth, enchanted with the free and idle life of a young man. By means of these two windows, looking into the street, Albert could see all that passed; the sight of what is going on is so necessary to young men, who wish always to see the world traverse their

horizon, be that horizon but the street only. Then, should anything appear to merit a more minute examination, Albert de Morcerf could follow up his researches by means of a small gate, similar to that close to the concierge's door, and which merits a particular description. It was a little entrance that seemed never to have been opened since the house was built, so entirely was it covered with dust and dirt: but the well-oiled hinges and lock announced a frequent and mysterious employment. This door laughed at the concierge, from whose vigilance and jurisdiction it escaped, opening, like the door in the "Arabian Nights," the "*open sesame*" of Ali Baba, by a cabalistic word or a concerted rap without from the sweetest voices or whitest fingers in the world. At the end of a long corridor with which the door communicated, and which formed the antechamber, was, on the right, Albert's breakfast-room, looking into the court, and on the left of the salon, looking into the garden. Shrubs and creeping plants covered these windows, and hid from the garden and court these two apartments, the only rooms into which, as they were on the ground floor, the prying eyes of the curious could penetrate. On the first floor were the same rooms, with the addition of a third, formed out of the antechamber; these three rooms were a salon, a boudoir, and a bedroom. The salon downstairs was only an Algerian divan, for the use of smokers. The boudoir upstairs communicated with the bedchamber by an invisible door on the staircase—it is evident every precaution had been taken. Above this floor was a large *atelier*, which had been increased in size by pulling down the partitions; a pandemonium, in which the artist and the dandy strove for pre-eminence. There were collected and piled up all Albert's successive caprices, hunting-horns, bass-voils, flutes—a whole orchestra, for Albert had had not a taste, but a fancy for music; easels, palettes, brushes, pencils, for music had been succeeded by painting; foils, boxing-gloves, broadswords, and single-sticks, for, following the example of the fashionable young

men of the time, Albert de Morcerf cultivated, with far more perseverance than music and drawing, the three arts that complete a dandy's education, *i. e.*, fencing, boxing, and single-stick; and it was in this apartment that he received Grisier, Cook, and Charles Lecour. The rest of the furniture of this privileged apartment consisted of old cabinets of the time of Francis I., filled with China and Japan vases, earthenware from Lucca and Robbia; plates of Bernard de Palissy; of old armchairs, in which had perhaps reposed themselves Henry IV. or Sully, Louis XIII. or Richelieu, for two of these armchairs, adorned with a carved shield on which were engraved the fleurs-de-lis of France on an azure field, evidently came from the Louvre, or at least some royal residence. On these dark and sombre chairs were thrown splendid stuffs, dyed beneath Persia's sun, or woven by the fingers of the women of Calcutta or of Chandernagor. What these stuffs did there it was impossible to say; they awaited, whilst gratifying the eyes, a destination unknown to their owner himself; in the meantime they filled the room with their golden and silken reflections. In the centre of the room was a piano in rosewood of Roller & Blanchet, of small dimensions, but containing an orchestra in its narrow and sonorous cavity, and groaning beneath the weight of the chefs-d'œuvres of Beethoven, Weber, Mozart, Haydn, Gretry, and Porpora.

On the walls, over the doors, on the ceiling, were swords, daggers, Malay creeses, maces, battle-axes, suits of armor, gilded, damasked, and inlaid, dried plants, minerals, and stuffed birds, opening their flame-colored wings as if for flight, and their beaks that never close. This was the favorite sitting-room of Albert.

However, the morning of the appointment, the young man had established himself in the small salon downstairs. There, on a table, surrounded at some distance by a large and luxurious divan, every species of tobacco known, from the yellow tobacco of St. Petersburg to the black tobacco

of Sinai, the Maryland, the Porto Rico, and the Latakiah, was exposed in those pots of cracked earthenware of which the Dutch are so fond; beside them, in boxes of fragrant wood, were ranged, according to their size and quality, pueros, regalias, Havanas, and Manillas; and in an open cabinet a collection of German pipes, of chibouques, with their amber mouthpieces ornamented with coral, and of narguellahs, with their long tubes of morocco, awaited the caprice or the sympathy of the smokers. Albert had himself presided at the arrangement, or rather the symmetrical derangement which, after coffee, the guests at a breakfast of modern days love to contemplate through the vapor that escapes from their mouths and ascends in long and fanciful wreaths to the ceiling.

At a quarter to ten the valet entered; he composed, with a little groom named John, and who only spoke English, all Albert's establishment, although the cook of the hotel was always at his service, and on great occasions the count's chasseur also. This valet, whose name was Germain, and who enjoyed the entire confidence of his young master, held in one hand a number of papers, and in the other a packet of letters, which he gave to Albert. Albert glanced carelessly at the different missives, selected two written in a small and delicate hand, and enclosed in scented envelopes, opened them, and perused their contents with some attention.

"How did these letters come?" said he.

"One by the post; Madame Danglars's footman left the other."

"Let Madame Danglars know that I accept the place she offers me in her box. Wait: then, during the day, tell Rosa that when I leave the Opera I will sup with her as she wishes. Take her six bottles of different wine, Cyprus, sherry, and Malaga, and a barrel of Ostend oysters; get them at Borel's, and be sure you say they are for me."

"At what o'clock, sir, do you breakfast?"

"What time is it now?"

"A quarter to ten."

"Very well, at half-past ten. Debray will, perhaps, be obliged to go to the minister — and besides" (Albert looked at his tablets), "it is the hour I told the count, 21st May, at half-past ten, and though I do not much rely upon his promise, I wish to be punctual. Is madame la comtesse up yet?"

"If M. le vicomte wishes, I will inquire?"

"Yes, ask her for one of her liqueur cellarets, mine is incomplete; and tell her I shall have the honor of seeing her about three o'clock, and that I request permission to introduce some one to her."

The valet left the room. Albert threw himself on the divan, tore off the cover of two or three of the papers, looked at the play-bills, made a face at perceiving they played an opera, and not a ballet; hunted vainly among the advertisements for a new tooth-powder of which he had heard, and threw down, one after the other, the three leading papers of Paris, muttering:

"These papers become more and more stupid every day."

A moment after a carriage stopped before the door, and the servant announced M. Lucien Debray. A tall young man, with light hair, clear gray eyes, and thin, compressed lips, dressed in a blue coat with buttons of gold, beautifully carved, a white neckcloth, and a tortoise-shell eyeglass suspended by a silken thread, which, by an effort of the superciliary and zygomatic nerves, he fixed in his eye, entered, with an half-official air, without smiling or speaking.

"Good morning, Lucien! good morning!" said Albert; "your punctuality really alarms me. What do I say? punctuality! You, whom I expected last, you arrive at five minutes to ten, when the time fixed was half-past! Have ministers resigned?"

"No, my dear fellow," returned the young man, seating himself on the divan; "reassure yourself: we are tottering

always, but we never fall; and I begin to believe that we shall pass into a state of immobility, and then the affairs of the Peninsula will completely consolidate us."

"Ah, true! you drive Don Carlos out of Spain."

"No, no, my dear fellow; do not confound our plans. We take him to the other side of the French frontier, and offer him hospitality at Bourges."

"At Bourges?"

"Yes, he has not much to complain of; Bourges is the capital of Charles VII. Do you know that all Paris knew it yesterday, and the day before it had already transpired on the Bourse, and M. Danglars (I do not know by what means that man contrives to obtain intelligence as soon as we do) made a million?"

"And you another order, for I see you have a blue ribband at your buttonhole."

"Yes, they sent me the order of Charles III.," returned Debray, carelessly.

"Come, do not affect indifference, but confess you were pleased to have it."

"Oh, it is very well as a finish to the toilet. It looks very neat on a black coat buttoned up."

"And makes you resemble the Prince of Wales or the Duke de Reichstadt."

"It is for that reason you see me so early."

"Because you have the order of Charles III., and you wish to announce the good news to me?"

"No, because I passed the night writing letters — five and twenty dispatches. I returned at daybreak and strove to sleep, but my head ached, and I got up to have a ride for an hour. At the Bois de Boulogne *ennui* and hunger attacked me at once — two enemies who rarely accompany each other, and who are yet leagued against me, a sort of Carlo-republican alliance. I then recollected you gave a breakfast this morning, and here I am. I am hungry, feed me; I am bored, amuse me."

"It is my duty as your host," returned Albert, ringing

the bell, whilst Lucien turned over, with his gold-mounted cane, the papers that lay on the table. "Germain, a glass of sherry and a biscuit. In the meantime, my dear Lucien, here are cigars — contraband, of course; try them, and persuade the minister to sell us such instead of poisoning us with cabbage-leaves."

"*Peste!* I will do nothing of the kind; the moment they come from government you would find them execrable. Besides, that does not concern the home, but the financial department. Address yourself to M. Humann, section of the indirect contributions, Corridor A., No. 26."

"On my word," said Albert, "you astonish me by the extent of your acquaintance. Take a cigar."

"Really, my dear count," replied Lucien, lighting a Manilla at a rose-colored taper that burned in a stand beautifully enamelled — "how happy you are to have nothing to do; you do not know your own good fortune!"

"And what would you do, my dear diplomatist," replied Morcerf, with a slight degree of irony in his voice, "if you did nothing? What! private secretary to a minister, plunged at once into European cabals and Parisian intrigues; having kings, and, better still, queens to protect, parties to unite, elections to direct; making more use of your cabinet with your pen and your telegraph than Napoleon did of his battle-fields with his sword and his victories; possessing five and twenty thousand francs a year, besides your place; a horse for which Château-Renaud offered you four hundred louis, and which you would not part with; a tailor who never disappoints you; with the Opera, the Jockey Club, and other varieties, can you not amuse yourself? Well, I will amuse you."

"How?"

"By introducing to you a new acquaintance."

"A man or a woman?"

"A man."

"I know so many already."

"But you do not know this man."

"Where does he come from — the end of the world?"

"Further still, perhaps."

"The devil! I hope he does not bring our breakfast with him."

"Oh, no! our breakfast comes from my father's kitchen. Are you hungry?"

"Humiliating as such a confession is, I am. But I dined at M. de Villefort's, and lawyers always give you very bad dinners. You would think they felt some remorse; did you ever remark that?"

"Ah! depreciate other persons' dinners; you ministers give such splendid ones."

"Yes! but we do not invite people of fashion. If we were not forced to entertain a parcel of country boobies because they think and vote for us, we should never dream of dining at home, I assure you."

"Well, take another glass of sherry and another biscuit."

"Willingly. Your Spanish wine is excellent. You see we were quite right to pacify that country."

"Yes; but Don Carlos?"

"Well, Don Carlos will drink Bordeaux, and in ten years we will marry his son to the little queen."

"You will then obtain the Golden Fleece, if you are still in the ministry."

"I think, Albert, you have adopted the system of feeding me on smoke this morning."

"Well, you must allow it is the best thing for the stomach; but I hear Beauchamp in the next room; you can dispute together, and that will pass away the time."

"About what?"

"About papers."

"My dear friend," said Lucien, with an air of sovereign contempt, "do I ever read the papers?"

"Then you will dispute the more."

"M. Beauchamp!" announced the servant.

"Enter, enter," said Albert, rising and advancing to meet the young man.

"Here is Debray, who detests you without reading you, so he says."

"He is quite right," returned Beauchamp, "for I criticise him without knowing what he does. Good day, commander!"

"Ah! you know that already," said the private secretary, smiling and shaking hands with him.

"Pardieu!"

"And what do you say of it in the world?"

"In which world? we have so many worlds in the year of grace 1838."

"In the entire political world, of which you are one of the leaders."

"They say it is quite fair, and that you sow so much red, that you must reap a little blue."

"Come, come! that is not bad!" said Lucien. "Why do you not join our party, my dear Beauchamp? With your talents you would make your fortune in three or four years."

"I only await one thing before following your advice, that is, a minister who will hold office for six months. My dear Albert, one word; for I must get poor Lucien a respite. Do we breakfast or dine? I must go to the Chamber, for our life is not an idle one."

"You only breakfast; I await two persons, and the instant they arrive we shall sit down to table."

CHAPTER XL.

THE BREAKFAST.

"AND what sort of persons do you expect to breakfast?" said Beauchamp.

"A gentleman, and a diplomatist."

"Then we shall have to wait two hours for the gentleman, and three for the diplomatist. I shall come back to dessert; keep me some strawberries, coffee, and cigars. I shall take a cutlet on my way to the Chamber."

"Do not do anything of the sort, for were the gentleman a Montmorency, and the diplomatist a Metternich, we will breakfast at eleven; in the meantime, follow Debray's example, and take a glass of sherry and a biscuit."

"Be it so, I will stay. I must do something to distract my thoughts."

"You are like Debray; and yet it seems to me that when the minister is out of spirits, the opposition ought to be joyous."

"Ah, you do not know with what I am threatened. I shall hear this morning M. Danglars make a speech at the Chamber of Deputies, and at his wife's this evening I shall hear the tragedy of a peer of France. The devil take the constitutional government! and since we had our choice, as they say, at least, how could we choose that?"

"I understand; you must lay in a stock of hilarity."

"Do not run down M. Danglars's speeches," said Debray; "he votes for you, for he belongs to the opposition."

"*Pardieu!* that is exactly the worst of it: I am waiting until you send him to speak of the Luxembourg to laugh at my ease."

"My dear friend," said Albert to Beauchamp, "it is plain the affairs of Spain are settled, for you are most desperately out of humor this morning. Recollect that Parisian gossip has spoken of a marriage between myself and Mlle. Eugenie Danglars; I cannot, in conscience, therefore, let you run down the speeches of the man who will one day say to me, 'M. le vicomte, you know I give my daughter eighty thousand pounds.'"

"Ah, this marriage will never take place," said Beauchamp. "The king has made him a baron, and can make him a peer, but he cannot make him a gentleman; and the Count de Morcerf is too aristocratic to consent, for the paltry sum of eighty thousand pounds, to a *mésalliance*. The Viscount de Morcerf can only wed a marchioness."

"But eighty thousand pounds is a nice little sum," replied Morcerf.

"It is the social capital of a theatre on the Boulevard, or a railroad from the Jardin des Plantes to La Rapée."

"Never mind what he says, Morcerf," said Debray, "do you marry her. You marry a ticket of a money-bag, it is true; well, but what does that matter? it is better to have a blazon less and a figure more on it. You have seven martlets on your arms; give three to your wife, and you will still have four; that is one more than M. de Guise had, who so nearly became king of France, and whose cousin was emperor of Germany."

"On my word I think you are right, Lucien," said Albert, absently.

"To be sure; besides, every millionaire is as noble as a bastard — that is, he can be."

"Do not say that, Debray," returned Beauchamp, laughing, "for here is Château-Renaud, who, to cure you of your

mania for paradoxes, will pass the sword of Renaud de Montauban, his ancestor, through your body."

"He will sully it, then," returned Lucien, "for I am low — very low."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Beauchamp, "the minister quotes Beranger; what shall we come to next?"

"M. de Château-Renaud! M. Maximilian Morrel!" said the servant, announcing two fresh guests.

"Now, then, to breakfast," said Beauchamp; "for, if I remember, you told me you only expected two persons, Albert."

"Morrel!" muttered Albert, "Morrel! who is he?"

But before he had finished, M. de Château-Renaud, a handsome young man of thirty, a gentleman all over, that is, with the figure of a Guiche and the wit of a Mortemart, took Albert's hand.

"My dear Albert," said he, "let me introduce to you M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis, my friend, and what is more — however, the man speaks for himself — my preserver. Salute my hero, viscount."

And he stepped on one side, exhibiting the large and open brow, the piercing eyes and black moustache of the fine and noble young man whom our readers have already seen at Marseilles, under circumstances sufficiently dramatic not to be forgotten. A rich uniform, half French, half Oriental, set off his broad chest, decorated with the order of the Legion of Honor, and his graceful and stalwart figure.

The young officer bowed with easy and elegant politeness.

"Monsieur," said Albert, with affectionate courtesy, "M. le Comte de Château-Renaud knew how much pleasure this introduction would give me; you are his friend, be ours also."

"Well said!" interrupted Château-Renaud; "and pray that, if you should ever be in a similar predicament, he may do as much for you as he did for me."

"What has he done?" asked Albert.

"Oh! nothing worth speaking of," said Morrel; "M. de Château-Renaud exaggerates."

"Not worth speaking of?" cried Château-Renaud; "life is not worth speaking of! — that is rather too philosophical, on my word, Morrel. It is very well for you, who risk your life every day; but for me who only did so once —"

"What is evident in all this, baron, is, that M. le Capitaine Morrel saved your life."

"Exactly so!"

"On what occasion?" asked Beauchamp.

"Beauchamp, my good fellow, you know I am starving," said Debray, "do not set him off on some long story."

"Well, I do not prevent your sitting down to table," replied Beauchamp; "Château-Renaud can tell us whilst we eat our breakfast."

"Gentlemen," said Morcerf, "it is only a quarter past ten, and I expect some one else."

"Ah, true! a diplomatist!" observed Debray.

"I know not whether he be or not; I only know that I gave him a mission which he terminated so entirely to my satisfaction, that had I been king, I should have instantly created him knight of all my orders, even had I been able to offer him the Golden Fleece and the Garter."

"Well, since we are not to sit down to table," said Debray, "take a glass of sherry and tell us all about it."

"You all know that I had the fancy of going to Africa."

"It is a road your ancestors have traced for you," said Albert, gallantly.

"Yes, but I doubt that your object was like theirs — to rescue the Holy Sepulchre."

"You are quite right, Beauchamp," observed the young aristocrat. "It was only to fight as an amateur. I cannot bear duelling ever since two seconds, whom I had chosen to accommodate a quarrel, forced me to break the arm of one of my best friends, one whom you all know — poor Franz d'Epinay."

"Ah, true!" said Debray, "you did fight some time ago; about what?"

"The devil take me if I remember!" returned Château-Renaud. "But I recollect perfectly one thing: that, being unwilling to let such talents as mine sleep, I wished to try upon the Arabs the new pistols that had been given to me. In consequence, I embarked for Oran, and went from thence to Constantine, where I arrived just in time to witness the raising of the siege. I retreated with the rest, during eight and forty hours. I endured the rain during the day, and the cold during the night, tolerably well, but the third morning my horse died of cold. Poor brute! accustomed to be covered up and to have a stove in the stable, an Arabian finds himself unable to bear ten degrees of cold in Arabia."

"That's why you want to purchase my English horse," said Debray; "you think he will support the cold better."

"You are mistaken, for I have made a vow never to return to Africa."

"You were very much frightened, then?" asked Beauchamp.

"I confess it, and I had good reason to be so," replied Château-Renaud. "I was retreating on foot, for my horse was dead. Six Arabs came up full gallop to cut off my head. I shot two with my double-barrelled gun, and two more with my pistols, but I was then disarmed, and two were still left; one seized me by the hair (that is why I now wear it so short, for no one knows what may happen), the other encircled my neck with the yataghan, when this gentleman, whom you see here, charged them, shot the one who held me by the hair with a pistol, and cleft the skull of the other with his sabre. He had assigned himself the task of saving the life of a man that day — chance caused that man to be myself; when I am rich, I will order a statue of Chance from Klugmann or Marochetti."

"Yes," said Morrel, smiling, "it was the 5th of September, the anniversary of the day on which my father

was miraculously preserved; therefore, as far as it lies in my power, I endeavor to celebrate it by some —— ”

“Heroic action,” interrupted Château-Renaud. “I was chosen. But this is not all; after rescuing me from the sword, he rescued me from the cold, not by sharing his cloak with me, like St. Martin, but by giving me it all; then, from hunger, by sharing with me—guess what?”

“A Strasbourg pie?” asked Beauchamp.

“No, his horse, of which we each of us ate a slice with a hearty appetite; it was very hard.”

“The horse?” said Morcerf, laughing.

“No, the sacrifice,” returned Château-Renaud; “ask Debray if he would sacrifice his English steed for a stranger?”

“Not for a stranger,” said Debray, “but for a friend I might, perhaps.”

“I divined that you would become mine, M. le comte,” replied Morrel; “besides, as I had the honor to tell you, heroism or not, sacrifice or not, that day I owed an offering to bad fortune in recompense for the favors good fortune had on other days granted to us.”

“The history to which M. Morrel alludes,” continued Château-Renaud, “is an admirable one, which he will tell you some day when you are better acquainted with him; to-day let us fill our stomachs, and not our memories. What time do you breakfast, Albert?”

“At half-past ten.”

“Precisely?” asked Debray, taking out his watch.

“Oh! you will give me five minutes’ grace,” replied Morcerf, “for I also expect a preserver.”

“Of whom?”

“Of myself,” cried Morcerf; “*parbleu!* do you think I cannot be saved as well as any one else, and that there are only Arabs who cut off heads? Our breakfast is a philanthropic one; and we shall have at table—at least, I hope so—two benefactors of humanity.”

"What shall we do?" said Debray; "we have only one Monthyon prize."

"Well, it will be given to some one who has done nothing to deserve it," said Beauchamp; "that is the way the Academy mostly escapes from the dilemma."

"And where does he come from?" asked Debray. "You have already answered the question once, but so vaguely that I venture to put it a second time."

"Really," said Albert, "I do not know; when I invited him, three months ago, he was at Rome, but since that time who knows where he may have gone?"

"And you think him capable of being exact?" demanded Debray.

"I think him capable of everything."

"Well, with the five minutes' grace, we have only ten left."

"I will profit by them to tell you something about my guest."

"I beg pardon!" interrupted Beauchamp; "are there any materials for an article in what you are going to tell us?"

"Yes; and for a most curious one."

"Go on, then, for I see I shall not get to the Chamber this morning, and I must make up for it."

"I was at Rome the last Carnival."

"We know that," said Beauchamp.

"Yes, but what you do not know is that I was carried off by bandits."

"There are no bandits," cried Debray.

"Yes, there are, and most hideous or rather most admirable ones, for I found them ugly enough to frighten me."

"Come, my dear Albert," said Debray; "confess that your cook is behindhand, that the oysters have not arrived from Ostend or Marennes, and that, like Madame de Maintenon, you are going to replace the dish by a story. Say so at once; we are sufficiently well bred to excuse

you, and to listen to your history, fabulous as it promises to be."

"And I say to you, fabulous as it may seem, I tell it as a true one from beginning to end. The brigands had carried me off, and conducted me to a most gloomy spot, called the Catacombs of Saint Sebastian."

"I know it," said Château-Renaud; "I narrowly escaped catching a fever there."

"And I did more than that," replied Morcerf, "for I caught one. I was informed I was a prisoner, until I paid the sum of 4,000 Roman crowns — about 24,000 francs. Unfortunately, I had not above 1,500. I was at the end of my journey and of my credit. I wrote to Franz — and were he here he would confirm every word — I wrote then to Franz, that if he did not come with the four thousand crowns before six, at ten minutes past I should have gone to join the blessed saints and glorious martyrs, in whose company I had the honor of being; and Signor Luigi Vampa — such was the name of the chief of these bandits — would have scrupulously kept his word."

"But Franz did come with the four thousand crowns," said Château-Renaud. "A man whose name is Franz d'Epinay or Albert de Morcerf has not much difficulty in procuring them."

"No! he arrived accompanied simply by the guest I am going to present to you."

"Ah! this gentleman is a Hercules killing Cacus, — a Perseus freeing Andromeda!"

"No, he is a man about my own size."

"Armed to the teeth?"

"He had not even a knitting-needle."

"But he paid your ransom?"

"He said two words to the chief, and I was free."

"They apologized to him for having carried you off," said Beauchamp.

"Just so."

"Why, he is a second Ariosto."

"No; his name is the Count of Monte-Cristo."

"There is not a Count of Monte-Cristo," said Debray.

"I do not think so," added Château-Renaud, with the air of a man who knows the whole of the European nobility perfectly.

"Does any one know anything of a Count of Monte-Cristo?"

"He comes possibly from the Holy Land, and one of his ancestors possessed Calvary as the Mortemarts did the Dead Sea."

"I think I can assist your researches," said Maximilian. "Monte-Cristo is a little island I have often heard spoken of by the old sailors my father employed. A grain of sand in the centre of the Mediterranean—an atom in the infinite."

"Precisely!" cried Albert. "Well, he of whom I speak is the lord and master of this grain of sand, of this atom; he has purchased the title of count somewhere in Tuscany."

"He is rich, then?"

"I believe so."

"But that ought to be visible."

"That is what deceives you, Debray."

"I do not understand you."

"Have you read the 'Arabian Nights'?"

"What a question!"

"Well, do you know if the persons you see there are rich or poor, if their sacks of wheat are not rubies or diamonds? They seem like poor fishermen, and suddenly they open some mysterious cavern filled with the wealth of the Indies."

"Afterwards?"

"My Count of Monte-Cristo is one of those fishermen. He has even a name taken from the book, since he calls himself Sinbad the Sailor, and has a cave filled with gold."

"And you have seen this cabin, Morcerf?" asked Beauchamp.

"No! but Franz has; for Heaven's sake not a word of

this before him. Franz went in with his eyes blindfolded, and was served by mutes and women to whom Cleopatra was nothing. Only he is not quite sure about the women, for they did not come in until after he had taken some hashish, so that what he took for the women might have been simply a row of statues."

The two young men looked at Morcerf as if to say, "Are you mad, or are you laughing at us?"

"And I also," said Morrel, thoughtfully, "have heard something like this from an old sailor named Penelon."

"Ah!" cried Albert, "it is very lucky that M. Morrel comes to aid me; you are vexed — are you not? — that he thus gives a clew to the labyrinth."

"My dear Albert," said Debray, "what you tell us is so extraordinary."

"Ah! because your ambassadors and your consuls do not tell you of them — they have no time. They must not molest their countrymen who travel."

"Now you get angry and attack our poor agents. How will you have them protect you? The Chamber cuts down their salaries every day, so that now they have scarcely any. Will you be ambassador, Albert? I will send you to Constantinople."

"No; lest on the first demonstration I make in favor of Mehemet Ali the sultan send me the bowstring, and make my secretaries strangle me."

"There, now!" said Debray.

"Yes, but this does not prevent the Count of Monte-Cristo from existing."

"*Pardieu!* every one exists."

"Doubtless, but not in the same way; every one has not black slaves, superb galleys, arms like those at La Casauba, Arabian horses, and Greek mistresses."

"Have you seen his Greek?"

"I have both seen and heard her. I saw her at the theatre, and heard her one morning when I breakfasted with the count."

"He eats, then?"

"Yes, but so little it can hardly be called eating."

"He must be a vampire."

"Laugh if you will; the Countess G——, who had known Lord Ruthven, declared the count was a vampire."

"Ah, capital!" said Beauchamp. "For a man not connected with newspapers, here is the pendant to the famous sea-serpent of the 'Constitutionnel.'"

"Wild eyes, the iris of which contracts or dilates at pleasure," said Debray, "facial angle strongly developed, magnificent forehead, livid complexion, black beard, sharp and white teeth, politeness unexceptionable."

"Just so, Lucien," returned Morcerf. "You have described him feature for feature. Yes, keen and cutting politeness. This man has often made me shudder; and one day that we were viewing an execution I thought I should faint, more from hearing the cold and calm manner in which he spoke of every description of torture, than from the sight of the executioner and the culprit."

"Did he not conduct you to the ruins of the Colosseum and suck your blood?" asked Beauchamp.

"Or, after having delivered you, made you sign a blood-colored parchment surrendering your soul to him?"

"Rail on — rail on at your ease, gentlemen," said Morcerf, somewhat piqued. "When I look at you Parisians, idlers on the Boulevard de Gand or the Bois de Boulogne, and think of this man, it seems to me we are not of the same race."

"I am highly flattered," returned Beauchamp.

"At the same time," added Château-Renaud, "your Count of Monte-Cristo is a very fine fellow, always excepting his little arrangements with the Italian banditti."

"There are no Italian banditti!" said Debray.

"No vampire!" cried Beauchamp.

"No Count of Monte-Cristo!" added Debray. "There is half-past ten striking, Albert!"

"Confess you have dreamed this, and let us sit down to breakfast," continued Beauchamp.

But the sound of the clock had not died away when Germain announced:

"His excellency the Count of Monte-Cristo."

The involuntary start every one gave, proved how much Morcerf's narrative had impressed them, and Albert himself could not prevent himself from feeling a sudden emotion. He had not heard a carriage stop in the street, or steps in the antechamber; the door had itself opened noiselessly.

The count appeared, dressed with the greatest simplicity, but the most fastidious dandy could have found nothing to cavil at in his toilet; every article of dress, hat, coat, gloves, and boots, were from the first makers. He seemed scarcely five and thirty; but what struck everybody was the extreme resemblance to the portrait Debray had drawn.

The count advanced smiling into the centre of the room and approached Albert, who hastened towards him, holding out his hand.

"Punctuality," said Monte-Cristo, "is the politeness of kings — according to one of your sovereigns, I think; but it is not the same with the travellers. However, I hope you will excuse the two or three seconds I am behind-hand; five hundred leagues are not to be accomplished without some trouble, and especially in France, where it seems it is forbidden to beat the postilions."

"M. le comte," replied Albert, "I was announcing your visit to some of my friends, whom I had invited in consequence of the promise you did me the honor to make, and whom I now present to you. They are M. le Comte de Château-Renaud, whose nobility goes back to the twelve peers, and whose ancestors had a place at the Round Table; M. Lucien Debray, private secretary to the ministre de l'intérieur; M. Beauchamp, an editor of a paper, and the terror of the French government, but of whom, in spite of

his celebrity, you have not heard in Italy, since his paper is prohibited there; and M. Maximilian Morrel, captain of Spahis."

At this name the count, who had hitherto saluted every one with courtesy, but at the same time with coldness and formality, stepped a pace forward, and a slight tinge of red colored his pale cheeks.

"You wear the uniform of the new French conquerors, monsieur," said he. "It is a handsome uniform."

No one could have said what caused the count's voice to vibrate so deeply, and what made his eye flash, which was in general so clear, lustrous, and limpid, when he pleased.

"You have never seen our Africans, M. le comte?" said Albert.

"Never," replied the count, who was by this time perfectly master of himself again.

"Well, beneath this uniform beats one of the bravest and noblest hearts in the whole army."

"Oh, M. de Morcerf!" interrupted Morrel.

"Let me go on, captain. And we have just heard," continued Albert, "of a fresh action of monsieur, and so heroic a one, that, although I have seen him to-day for the first time, I request you to allow me to introduce him as my friend."

At these words it was still possible to remark in Monte-Cristo that fixed gaze, that passing color, and that slight trembling of the eyelids, that showed his emotion.

"Ah! you have a noble heart!" said the count, "so much the better."

This exclamation, which corresponded to the count's own thought, rather than to what Albert was saying, surprised everybody, and especially Morrel, who looked at Monte-Cristo with surprise. But, at the same time, the intonation was so soft, that, however strange the exclamation might seem, it was impossible to be offended at it.

"Why should he doubt it?" said Beauchamp to Châteaurenard.

"In reality," replied the latter, who, with his aristocratic glance and his knowledge of the world, had penetrated at once all that was penetrable in Monte-Cristo, "Albert has not deceived us, for the count is a most singular being. What say you, Morrel?"

"*Ma foi!* he has an open look about him, that pleases me, in spite of the singular remark he has made about me."

"Gentlemen," said Albert, "Germain informs me breakfast is ready. My dear count, allow me to show you the way."

They passed silently into the breakfast-room; every one at once took his place.

"Gentlemen," said the count, seating himself, "permit me to make a confession which must form my excuse for any *inconvenances* I may commit. I am a stranger, and a stranger to such a degree, that this is the first time I have ever been at Paris. The French way of living is utterly unknown to me, and up to the present time I have followed the Eastern customs, which are entirely in contrast to the Parisian. I beg you, therefore, to excuse me if you find anything in me too Turkish, too Italian, or too Arabian. Now, then, let us breakfast."

"With what an air he says all this!" muttered Beauchamp; "decidedly he is a great man."

"A great man in his country," added Debray.

"A great man in every country, M. Debray," said Châteaurenault.

The count was, it may be remembered, a most temperate guest. Albert remarked this, expressing his fears lest, at the outset, the Parisian mode of life should displease the traveller in the most essential point.

"My dear count," said he, "I fear one thing, and that is, that the fare of the Rue du Helder is not so much to your taste as that of the Place d'Espagne. I ought to have consulted you on the point, and have had some dishes prepared expressly."

"Did you know me better," returned the count, smiling, "you would not give one thought of such a thing for a traveller like myself, who has successively lived on macaroni at Naples, polenta at Milan, olla podrida at Valencia, pilau at Constantinople, karrick in India, and swallow's nests in China. I eat everywhere, and of everything, only I eat but little; and to-day that you reproach me with my want of appetite is my day of appetite, for I have not eaten since yesterday morning."

"What!" cried all the guests, "you have not eaten for four and twenty hours?"

"No," replied the count, "I was forced to go out of my road to obtain some information near Nîmes; so that I was somewhat late, and therefore I did not choose to stop."

"And you ate in your carriage?" asked Morcerf.

"No, I slept, as I generally do when I am weary, without having the courage to amuse myself, or when I am hungry, without feeling inclined to eat."

"But you can sleep when you please, monsieur?" said Morrel.

"Yes."

"You have a recipe for it?"

"An infallible one."

"That would be invaluable to us in Africa, who have not always any food to eat, and rarely anything to drink."

"Yes," said Monte-Cristo, "but, unfortunately, a recipe excellent for a man like myself would be very dangerous applied to an army, which might not awake when it was needed."

"May we inquire what is this recipe?" asked Debray.

"Oh, yes," returned Monte-Cristo, "I make no secret of it; it is a mixture of excellent opium, which I fetched myself from Canton in order to have it pure, and the best hashish which grows in the East, that is, between the Tigris and the Euphrates. These two ingredients are mixed in equal proportions, and formed into pills; ten minutes after one is taken the effect is produced. Ask

M. le Baron Franz d'Epinay; I think he tasted them one day."

"Yes," replied Morcerf, "he said something about it to me."

"But," said Beauchamp, who, in his capacity of journalist, was very incredulous, "you always carry this drug about you?"

"Always."

"Would it be an indiscretion to ask to see those precious pills?" continued Beauchamp, hoping to take him at a disadvantage.

"No, monsieur," returned the count; and he drew from his pocket a marvellous *bonbonnière*, formed out of a single emerald, and closed by a golden lid, which unscrewed and gave passage to a small ball of a greenish color, and about the size of a pea. This ball had an acrid and penetrating odor. There were four or five more in the emerald, which would contain about a dozen.

The *bonbonnière* passed around the table, but it was more to examine the valuable emerald than to see the pills that it passed from hand to hand.

"And is it your cook who prepares these pills?" asked Beauchamp.

"Oh, no, monsieur," replied Monte-Cristo; "I do not thus betray my enjoyments to the vulgar. I am a tolerable chemist, and prepare my pills myself."

"This is a magnificent emerald, and the largest I have ever seen," said Château-Renaud, "although my mother has some remarkable family jewels."

"I had three similar ones," returned Monte-Cristo; "I gave one to the Grand Signior, who mounted it in his sabre; another to our holy father, the pope, who had it set in his tiara, opposite to nearly as large, though not so fine a one, given by the Emperor Napoleon to his predecessor, Pius VII. I kept the third for myself, and had it hollowed out, which reduced its value, but rendered it more commodious for the purpose I intended it for."

Every one looked at Monte-Cristo with astonishment.

He spoke with so much simplicity, that it was evident he spoke the truth, or that he was mad. However, the sight of the emerald made them naturally incline to the former belief.

"And what did these two sovereigns give you in exchange for these magnificent presents?" asked Debray.

"The Grand Signior, the liberty of a woman," replied the count; "the pope, the life of a man; so that once in my life I have been as powerful as if Heaven had made me come into the world on the steps of the throne."

"And it was Peppino you saved, was it not?" cried Morcerf — "it was for him that you obtained pardon?"

"Perhaps," returned the count, smiling.

"Monsieur le comte, you have no idea what pleasure it gives me to hear you speak thus," said Morcerf. "I had announced you beforehand to my friends as an enchanter of the 'Arabian Nights,' a wizard of the Middle Ages; but the Parisians are people so subtle in paradoxes, that they mistake for caprices of the imagination the most incontestable truths, when these truths do not form a part of their daily existence. For example, here is Debray, who reads, and Beauchamp, who prints, every day — A member of the Jockey Club has been stopped and robbed on the Boulevard; that four persons have been assassinated in the Rue St. Denis or the Faubourg St. Germain; that ten, fifteen, or twenty thieves have been arrested in a *café* on the Boulevard du Temple, or in the Thermes de Julien, and who yet contest the existence of the bandits of the Maremma, of the Campagna di Romana, or the Pontine Marshes. Tell them yourself that I was taken by bandits, and that without your generous intercession I should now have been sleeping in the Catacombs of St. Sebastian, instead of receiving them in my humble abode in the Rue du Helder."

"Ah," said Monte-Cristo, "you promised me never to mention that circumstance."

"It was not I who made that promise," cried Morcerf; "it must have been some one else whom you have rescued in the same manner, and whom you have forgotten. Pray speak of it, for I shall not only, I trust, relate the little I do know, but also a great deal I do not know."

"It seems to me," returned the count, smiling, "that you played a sufficiently important part to know as well as myself what happened."

"Well, you promise me, if I tell all I know, to relate, in your turn, all that I do not know."

"This is but fair," replied Monte-Cristo.

"Well," said Morcerf, "for three days I believed myself the object of the attentions of a mask, whom I took for a descendant of Tullia or Poppæa, whilst I was the object of the attention of a *contadina*, and I say *contadina* to avoid saying peasant. What I know is, that, like a fool, a greater fool than he of whom I spoke just now, I mistook for this peasant a young bandit of fifteen or sixteen, with a beardless chin and slim waist, and who, just as I was about to imprint a chaste salute on his lips, placed a pistol to my head, and, aided by seven or eight others, led, or rather dragged, me to the Catacombs of St. Sebastian, where I found a highly educated chief of brigands perusing Cæsar's 'Commentaries,' and who deigned to leave off reading to inform me that unless the next morning, before six o'clock, four thousand piastres were paid in to his account at his banker's, at a quarter past six I should have ceased to exist. The letter is still to be seen, for it is in Franz d'Epinay's possession, signed by me, and with a postscript of M. Luigi Vampa. This is all I know, but I know not, M. le comte, how you contrived to inspire with such respect the bandits of Rome, who have so little respect for anything; I assure you Franz and I were lost in admiration."

"Nothing more simple," returned the count. "I had known the famous Vampa for more than ten years. When he was quite a child, and only a shepherd, I gave him, for

having shown me the way to a place, some pieces of gold; he, in order to repay me, gave me a poniard, the hilt of which he had carved with his own hand, and which you may have seen in my collection of arms. In after years, whether he had forgotten this interchange of presents, which ought to have cemented our friendship, or whether he did not recollect me, he sought to take me, but, on the contrary, it was I who captured him, and a dozen of his band. I might have handed him over to Roman justice, which is somewhat expeditious, and which would have been still more so with him; but I did nothing of the sort—I suffered him and his band to depart.”

“With the condition that they should sin no more?” said Beauchamp, laughing. “I see they kept their promise.”

“No, monsieur,” returned Monte-Cristo; “upon the simple condition that they should respect myself and friends. Perhaps what I am about to say may seem strange to you, who are socialists, and vaunt humanity and your duty to your neighbor, but I never seek to protect society who does not protect me, and whom I will even say, in general, occupies itself about me only to injure me; and thus giving them a low place in my esteem, and preserving a neutrality towards them, it is society and my neighbors who are indebted to me.”

“Bravo!” exclaimed Château-Renaud; “you are the first man I ever met with sufficient courage to preach egotism. Bravo! M. le comte, bravo!”

“It is frank, at least,” said Morrel. “But I am sure that M. le comte does not regret having once deviated from the principles he has so boldly avowed.”

“How have I deviated from those principles, monsieur?” asked Monte-Cristo, who could not help looking at Morrel with so much intensity, that two or three times the young man had been unable to sustain the clear piercing eye of the count.

“Why, it seems to me,” replied Morrel, “that, in de-

livering M. de Morcerf, whom you did not know, you did good to your neighbor and to society."

"Of which he is the brightest ornament," said Beauchamp, drinking off a glass of champagne.

"Monsieur le comte," cried Morcerf, "you are at fault; you, one of the most formidable logicians I know—and you must see it clearly proved, that instead of being an egotist, you are a philanthropist. Ah! you call yourself Oriental, a Levantine, Maltese, Indian, Chinese; your family name is Monte-Cristo; Sinbad the Sailor is your baptismal appellation, and yet the first day you set foot in Paris, you instinctively possess the greatest virtue, or rather the chief defect, of us eccentric Parisians—that is, you assume the vices you have not, and conceal the virtues you possess."

"My dear vicomte," returned Monte-Cristo, "I do not see, in all I have done, anything that merits, either from you or these gentlemen, the pretended eulogies I have received. You are no stranger to me, for I knew you, since I had given up two rooms to you—since I had invited you to breakfast with me—since I had lent you one of my carriages—since we had witnessed the Carnival together, and since we had also seen from a window of the Place del Popolo the execution that affected you so much that you nearly fainted. I will appeal to any of these gentlemen, could I leave my guest in the hands of a hideous bandit, as you term him? Besides, you know, I had the idea that you could introduce me into some of the Paris salons when I came to France. You might, some time ago, have looked upon this resolution as a vague project, but to-day you see it was a reality, and you must submit to it under penalty of breaking your word."

"I will keep it," returned Morcerf; "but I fear that you will be much disappointed, accustomed as you are to picturesque events and to fantastic horizons. Amongst us you will not meet with any of those episodes with which your adventurous existence has so familiarized you; our

Chimborazo is Montmartre, our Himalaya is Mount Valerien, our Great Desert is the Plain of Grenelle, where they are now boring an artesian well to water the caravans. We have plenty of thieves, though not so many as is said; but these thieves stand in far more dread of a policeman than a lord. France is so prosaic, and Paris so civilized a city, that you will not find in its eighty-five departments—I say eighty-five, because I do not include Corsica—you will not find, then, in these eighty-five departments, a single hill on which there is not a telegraph, or a grotto in which the commissary of police has not put up a gas-lamp. There is but one service I can render you, and for that I place myself entirely at your orders; that is, to present, or make my friends present, you everywhere; besides, you have no need of any one to introduce you—with your name, and your fortune, and your talent” (Monte-Cristo bowed with a somewhat ironical smile), “you can present yourself everywhere, and be well received; I can be useful in one way only: if knowledge of Parisian habits, of the means of rendering yourself comfortable, or of the bazaars, can assist, you may dispose of me to find you a fitting dwelling here. I dare offer to share my apartments with you, as I shared yours at Rome—I, who do not possess egotism, but am yet egotistical *par excellence*; for, except myself, these rooms would not contain a shadow, unless it were the shadow of a female.”

“Ah,” said the count, “that is a most conjugal reservation; I recollect that at Rome you said something of a projected marriage. May I congratulate you?”

“The affair is still in projection.”

“And he who says ‘in projection,’ means already decided,” said Debray.

“No,” replied Morcerf. “My father is most anxious about it; and I hope, ere long, to introduce you, if not to my wife, at least to my intended—Mademoiselle Eugenie Danglars.”

"Eugenie Danglars!" said Monte-Cristo; "tell me, is not her father M. le Baron Danglars?"

"Yes," returned Morcerf — "a baron of a new creation."

"What matter," said Monte-Cristo, "if he has rendered the state services which merit this distinction?"

"Enormous ones," answered Beauchamp. "Although in reality a liberal, he negotiated a loan of six million francs for Charles X., in 1829, who made him a baron and chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur; so that he wears the ribbon, not, as one would think, in his waistcoat-pocket, but at his buttonhole."

"Ah!" interrupted Morcerf, laughing, "Beauchamp, Beauchamp, keep that for the 'Charivari,' but spare my future father-in-law before me." Then, turning to Monte-Cristo, he said, "You just now pronounced his name as if you knew the baron?"

"I do not know him," returned Monte-Cristo; "but I shall probably soon make his acquaintance, for I have a credit opened with him by the house of Richard and Blount of London, Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna, and Thomson and French of Rome."

As he pronounced the last two names, the count glanced at Maximilian Morrel.

If the stranger expected to produce an effect on Morrel, he was not mistaken. Maximilian started as if he had been electrified.

"Thomson and French!" said he; "do you know this house, monsieur?"

"They are my bankers in the capital of the Christian world," returned the count, quietly. "Can my influence with them be of any service to you?"

"Oh! M. le comte, could you only assist me in researches which have been up to the present fruitless! This house in past years did ours a great service, and has, I know not for what reason, always denied having rendered us this service."

"I shall be at your orders," said Monte-Cristo, inclining himself.

"But," continued Morcerf, "*apropos* of Danglars, we have strangely wandered from the subject. We were speaking of a suitable habitation for the Count of Monte-Cristo. Come, gentlemen, let us all propose some place; where shall we lodge this new guest in our great capital?"

"Faubourg Saint Germain," said Château-Renaud. "The count will find there a charming hotel, with a court and garden."

"Bah! Château-Renaud," returned Debray, "you only know your dull and gloomy Faubourg Saint Germain; do not pay any attention to him, M. le comte. Live in the Chaussée d'Antin — that's the real centre of Paris."

"Boulevard de l'Opéra," said Beauchamp; "on the first floor — a house with a balcony. M. le comte will have his cushions of silver cloth brought there, and as he smokes his chibouque, see all Paris pass before him."

"You have no idea, then, Morrel?" asked Château-Renaud, "you do not propose anything?"

"Oh, yes," returned the young man, smiling; "on the contrary, I have one; but I expected the count would be tempted by one of the brilliant proposals made to him; yet as he has not replied to any of them, I will venture to offer him a suite of apartments in a charming hotel, in the Pompadour style, that my sister has inhabited for a year, in the Rue Meslay."

"You have a sister?" asked the count.

"Yes, monsieur, a most excellent sister."

"Married?"

"Nearly nine years."

"Happy?" asked the count again.

"As happy as it is permitted to a human creature to be," replied Maximilian. "She married the man she loved, who remained faithful to us in our fallen fortunes — Emmanuel Herbault."

Monte-Cristo smiled imperceptibly.

"I live there during my leave of absence," continued Maximilian, "and I shall be, together with my brother-in-law Emmanuel, at the disposition of M. le comte whenever he thinks fit to honor us."

"One minute!" cried Albert, without giving Monte-Cristo the time to reply. "Take care! you are going to immure a traveller, Sinbad the Sailor, a man who comes to see Paris; you are going to make a patriarch of him."

"Oh, no," said Morrel; "my sister is five and twenty, my brother-in-law is thirty; they are gay, young, and happy; besides, M. le comte will be in his own house, and only see them when he thinks fit to do so."

"Thanks, monsieur," said Monte-Cristo; "I shall content myself with being presented to your sister and her husband, if you will do me the honor to introduce me; but I cannot accept the offer of any one of these gentlemen, since my habitation is already prepared."

"What!" cried Morcerf, "you are, then, going to a hotel — that will be very dull for you."

"Was I so badly lodged at Rome?" said Monte-Cristo, smiling.

"*Parbleu!* — at Rome you spent fifty thousand piastres in furnishing your apartments, but I presume that you are not disposed to spend a similar sum every day."

"It is not that which deterred me," replied Monte-Cristo; "but as I determined to have a house to myself, I sent on my valet de chambre, and he ought by this time to have bought the house and furnished it."

"But you have, then, a valet de chambre who knows Paris?" said Beauchamp.

"It is the first time he has ever been in Paris. He is black, and cannot speak," returned Monte-Cristo.

"It is Ali!" cried Albert, in the midst of the general surprise.

"Yes, Ali himself, my Nubian mute, whom you saw, I think, at Rome."

"Certainly," said Morcerf; "I recollect him perfectly. But how could you charge a Nubian to purchase a house, and a mute to furnish it? He will do everything wrong."

"Undeceive yourself, monsieur," replied Monte-Cristo; "I am quite sure that, on the contrary, he will choose everything as I wish. He knows my tastes, my caprices, my wants; he has been here a week, with the instinct of a hound, hunting by himself; he will organize everything for me. He knew I should arrive to-day at ten o'clock; since nine he awaited me at the Barrière de Fontainebleau. He gave me this paper; it contains the number of my new abode; read it yourself," and Monte-Cristo passed a paper to Albert.

"Ah! that is really original," said Beauchamp.

"And very princely," added Château-Renaud.

"What! do you not know your house?" asked Debray.

"No," said Monte-Cristo; "I told you that I did not wish to be behind my time. I dressed myself in the carriage, and descended at the vicomte's door."

The young men looked at each other; they did not know if it was a comedy Monte-Cristo was playing; but every word he uttered had such an air of simplicity, that it was impossible to suppose what he said was false. Besides, why should he tell a falsehood?

"We must content ourselves, then," said Beauchamp, "with rendering M. le comte all the little services in our power. I, in my quality of journalist, open all the theatres to him."

"Thanks, monsieur," returned Monte-Cristo; "my steward has orders to take a box at each theatre."

"Is your steward also a Nubian?" asked Debray.

"No, he is a countryman of yours, if a Corsican is a countryman of any one's. But you know him, M. de Morcerf?"

"Is it that excellent M. Bertuccio, who understands hiring windows so well?"

"Yes, you saw him the day I had the honor of receiving you; he has been a soldier, a smuggler — in fact, everything. I would not be quite sure that he has not been mixed up with the police for some trifle — a stab with a knife, for instance."

"And you have chosen this honest citizen for your steward?" said Debray. "Of how much does he rob you every year?"

"On my word," replied the count, "not more than another. I am sure he answers my purpose, knows no impossibility, and so I keep him."

"Then," continued Château-Renaud, "since you have an establishment, a steward, and a hotel in the Champs Elysées, you only want a mistress."

Albert smiled. He thought of the fair Greek he had seen in the count's box at the Argentino and Valle theatres.

"I have something better than that," said Monte-Cristo; "I have a slave. You procure your mistresses from the Opera, the Vaudeville, or the Variétés; I purchased mine at Constantinople; it cost me more, but I have nothing to fear."

"But you forget," replied Debray, laughing, "that we are Franks by name and franks by nature, as King Charles said; and that the moment she puts her foot in France your slave becomes free."

"Who will tell her?"

"The first person who sees her."

"She only speaks Romaic."

"That is different."

"But at least we shall see her," said Beauchamp; "or do you keep eunuchs as well as mutes?"

"Oh, no," replied Monte-Cristo; "I do not carry brutality so far. Every one who surrounds me is free to quit me, and when they leave me will no longer have any need of me or any one else; it is for that reason, perhaps, that they do not quit me."

They had long since passed to dessert and cigars.

"My dear Albert," said Debray, rising, "it is half-past two. Your guest is charming; but you leave the best company to go into the worst sometimes. I must return to the minister's. I will tell him of the count, and we shall soon know who he is."

"Take care," returned Albert; "no one has been able to accomplish that."

"Oh, we have three millions for our police; it is true they are almost always spent beforehand; but no matter, we shall still have fifty thousand francs to spend for this purpose."

"And when you know, will you tell me?"

"I promise you. *Au revoir*, Albert. Gentlemen, good morning." As he left the room, Debray called out loudly: "My carriage."

"Bravo!" said Beauchamp to Albert; "I do not go to the Chamber, but I have something better to offer my readers than a speech of M. Danglars."

"For Heaven's sake, Beauchamp!" returned Morcerf, "do not deprive me of the merit of introducing him everywhere. Is he not peculiar?"

"He is more than that," replied Château-Renaud; "he is one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw in my life. Are you coming, Morrel?"

"Directly I have given my card to M. le comte, who has promised to pay us a visit at the Rue Meslay, No. 7."

"Be sure I shall not fail to do so," returned the count, bowing.

And Maximilian Morrel left the room with the Baron de Château-Renaud, leaving Monte-Cristo alone with Morcerf.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE PRESENTATION.

WHEN Albert found himself alone with Monte-Cristo, "M. le comte," said he, "allow me to commence my ciceroneship by showing you a specimen of a bachelor's apartment. You, who are accustomed to the palaces of Italy, can amuse yourself by calculating in how many square feet a young man who is not the worst lodged in Paris can live. As we pass from one room to another I will open the windows to let you breathe."

Monte-Cristo had already seen the breakfast-room and the salon on the ground floor. Albert led him first to his *atelier*, which was, as we have said, his favorite apartment. Monte-Cristo was a worthy appreciator of all that Albert had collected there — old cabinets, Japan porcelain, Oriental stuffs, Venice glass, arms from all parts of the world — everything was familiar to him; and at the first glance he recognized their date, their country, and their origin. Morcerf had expected he would be the guide; on the contrary, it was he who, under the count's guidance, followed a course of archæology, mineralogy, and natural history. They descended to the first floor; Albert led his guest into the salon. The salon was filled with the works of modern artists; there were landscapes of Dupre with their long reeds and tall trees, their lowing oxen and marvellous skies; Delacroix's Arabian cavaliers, with their long white burnoses, their shining belts, their damask arms, their horses, who tore each other with their teeth whilst their riders contended fiercely with their maces; *aquarelles* of Boulanger, representing Notre Dame de Paris with that

vigor that makes the artist the rival of the poet; there were paintings by Dias, who makes his flowers more beautiful than flowers, his suns more brilliant than the sun; designs of Decamp, as vividly colored as those of Salvator Rosa, but more poetic; *pastels* of Giraud and Müller, representing children like angels and women with features of a virgin; sketches torn from the album of Dauzat's "Travels in the East," that have been made in a few seconds on the saddle of a camel or beneath the dome of a mosque; in a word, all that art can give in exchange and as recompense for the art lost and gone with ages long since past.

Albert expected to have something new this time to show to the traveller, but to his great surprise, the latter, without seeking for the signatures, many of which, indeed, were only initials, named instantly the author of every picture in such a manner that it was easy to see that each name was not only known to him, but that each of their styles had been appreciated and studied by him.

From the salon they passed into the bedchamber; it was a model of taste and simple elegance. A single portrait, signed Leopold Robert, shone in its carved and gilded frame.

This portrait attracted the Count of Monte-Cristo's attention, for he made three rapid steps in the chamber, and stopped suddenly before it. It was the portrait of a young woman of five or six and twenty, with a dark complexion, and light, lustrous eyes veiled beneath their long lashes. She wore the picturesque costume of the Catalan fisherwomen, a red and black bodice, and the golden pins in her hair. She was looking at the sea, and her shadow was defined on the blue ocean and sky.

The light was so faint in the room, that Albert did not perceive the paleness that spread itself over the count's visage, or the nervous heaving of his chest and shoulders. Silence prevailed for an instant, during which Monte-Cristo gazed intently on the picture.

"You have there a most charming mistress, viscount," said the count, in a perfectly calm tone; "and this costume—a ball costume, doubtless—becomes her admirably."

"Ah, monsieur!" returned Albert, "I would never forgive you this mistake if you had seen another picture beside this. You do not know my mother; she it is whom you see here: she had her portrait painted thus six or eight years ago. This costume is a fancy one, it appears, and the resemblance is so great that I think I see my mother the same as she was in 1830. The countess had this portrait painted during the count's absence. She intended giving him an agreeable surprise, but, strange to say, this portrait seemed to displease my father, and the value of the picture, which is, as you see, one of the best works of Leopold Robert, could not overcome his dislike to it. It is true, between ourselves, that M. de Morcerf is one of the most assiduous peers at the Luxembourg, a general renowned for theory, but a most mediocre amateur of art. It is different with my mother, who paints exceedingly well, and who, unwilling to part with so valuable a picture, gave it to me to put here, where it would be less likely to displease M. de Morcerf, whose portrait by Gros I will also show you. Excuse my talking family matters; but as I shall have the honor of introducing you to the count, I tell you this to prevent you making any allusions to this picture. The picture seems to have a malign influence, for my mother rarely comes here without looking at it, and still more rarely does she look at it without weeping. This disagreement is the only one that has ever taken place between the count and countess, who are still as much united, although married more than twenty years, as the first day of their wedding."

Monte-Cristo glanced rapidly at Albert, as if to seek a hidden meaning in his words, but it was evident the young man uttered them in the simplicity of his heart.

"Now," said Albert, "that you have seen all my trea-

ures, allow me to offer them to you, unworthy as they are. Consider yourself as in your own house: and to put yourself still more at your ease, pray accompany me to the apartments of M. de Morcerf, to whom I wrote from Rome an account of the services you rendered me, and to whom I announced your promised visit, and I may say that both the count and countess anxiously desire to thank you in person. You are somewhat *blasé*, I know, and family scenes have not much effect on Sinbad the Sailor, who has seen so many others. However, accept what I propose to you as an initiation into Parisian life—a life of politeness, visiting, and introductions.”

Monte-Cristo bowed without making any answer; he accepted the offer without enthusiasm and without regret, as one of those conventions of society which every gentleman looks upon as a duty. Albert summoned his servant, and ordered him to acquaint M. and Madame de Morcerf of the arrival of the Count of Monte-Cristo.

Albert followed him with the count. When they arrived at the antechamber, above the door was visible a shield, which, by the rich ornaments and its harmony with the rest of the furniture, indicated the importance the owner attached to this blazon. Monte-Cristo stopped and examined it attentively.

“Azure seven merlets, or, placed bender,” said he. “These are doubtless your family arms? Except the knowledge of blazons that enables me to decipher them, I am very ignorant of heraldry—I, a count of a fresh creation, fabricated in Tuscany by the aid of a commandery of St. Stephen; and who would not have taken the trouble had I not been told that when you travel much it is necessary. Besides, you must have something on the panels of your carriage, to escape being searched by the custom-house officers. Excuse my putting such a question to you.”

“It is not indiscreet,” returned Morcerf, with the simplicity of conviction. “You have guessed rightly. These

are our arms; that is, those of my father; but they are, as you see, joined to another shield, which has gules, a silver tower, which are my mother's. By her side I am Spanish, but the family of Morcerf is French, and, I have heard, one of the oldest of the south of France."

"Yes," replied Monte-Cristo, "these blazons prove that almost all the armed pilgrims that went to the Holy Land took for their arms either a cross, in honor of their mission, or birds of passage, in sign of the long voyage they are about to undertake, and which they hoped to accomplish on the wings of faith. One of your ancestors had joined the Crusades; and supposing it to be only that of St. Louis, that makes you mount to the thirteenth century, which is tolerably ancient."

"It is possible," said Morcerf; "my father has in his study a genealogical tree which will tell you all that, and on which I made commentaries that would have greatly edified Hozier and Jancourt. At present I no longer think of it; and yet I must tell you that we are beginning to occupy ourselves greatly with these things under our popular government."

"Well, then, your government would do well to choose from the past something better than the things that I have noticed on your monuments, and which have no heraldic meaning whatever. As for you, viscount," continued Monte-Cristo to Morcerf, "you are more fortunate than the government, for your arms are really beautiful and speak to the imagination. Yes, you are at once from Provence and Spain; that explains, if the portrait you showed me be like, the dark hue I so much admired on the visage of the noble Catalan." .

It would have required the penetration of Œdipus or the Sphinx to have divined the irony the count concealed beneath these words, apparently uttered with the greatest politeness. Morcerf thanked him with a smile, and pushed open the door above which were his arms, and which, as we have said, opened into the salon.

In the most conspicuous part of the salon was another portrait. It was that of a man from five to eight and thirty, in the uniform of a general officer, wearing the double epaulet *en torsada*, that indicates superior rank; the ribbon of the Legion of Honor around his neck, which showed he was a commander; and on the breast, on the right, the star of a grand officer of the order of the Saviour, and on the left that of the grand cross of Charles III., which proved that the person represented by the picture had served in the wars of Greece and Spain, or, what was just the same thing as regarded decorations, had fulfilled some diplomatic mission in the two countries.

Monte-Cristo was engaged in examining this portrait with no less care than he had bestowed upon the other, when another door opened, and he found himself opposite to the Count de Morcerf himself. He was a man of forty or forty-five years, but he seemed at least fifty, and his black moustache and eyebrows contrasted strangely with his almost white hair, which was cut short, in the military fashion. He was dressed in plain clothes, and wore at his buttonhole the ribbons of the different orders to which he belonged. This man entered with a tolerably dignified step, and with a species of haste. Monte-Cristo saw him advance towards him without making a single step. It seemed as if his feet were rooted to the ground, and his eyes on the Count de Morcerf.

"Father," said the young man, "I have the honor of presenting to you M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo, the generous friend whom I had the good fortune to meet in the critical juncture of which I have told you."

"You are most welcome, monsieur," said the Count de Morcerf, saluting Monte-Cristo with a smile. "And monsieur has rendered our house, in preserving its only heir, a service which insures him our eternal gratitude."

As he said these words, the Count de Morcerf pointed to a chair, whilst he seated himself in another opposite the window.

Monte-Cristo, whilst he took the seat Morcerf offered him, placed himself in such a manner as to remain concealed in the shadow of the large velvet curtains, and read on the careworn and livid features of the count a whole history of secret griefs written in each wrinkle time had planted there.

"Madame la comtesse," said Morcerf, "was at her toilet when she was informed of the visit she was about to receive. She will, however, be in the salon in ten minutes."

"It is a great honor for me," returned Monte-Cristo, "to be thus, on the first day of my arrival in Paris, brought in contact with a man whose merit equals his reputation, and to whom fortune has for once been equitable; but has she not still on the plains of Mitidja, or in the mountains of Atlas, a marshal's staff to offer you?"

"Oh," replied Morcerf, reddening slightly, "I have left the service, monsieur. Made a peer at the Restoration, I served through the first campaign under the orders of Marshal Bourmont. I could therefore expect a higher rank, and who knows what might have happened had the elder branch remained on the throne? But the Revolution of July was, it seems, sufficiently glorious to allow itself to be ungrateful; and she was so for all services that did not date from the imperial period. I tendered my resignation, for when you have gained your epaulets on the battle-field, you do not know how to manœuvre on the slippery ground of the salon. I have hung up my sword, and cast myself into politics. I have devoted myself to industry; I study the useful arts. During the twenty years I served, I often wished to do so, but I had not the time."

"These are the ideas that render your nation superior to any other," returned Monte-Cristo. "A gentleman of high birth, possessor of an ample fortune, you have consented to gain your promotion as an obscure soldier, step by step — this is uncommon; then become general, peer of France,

commander of the Legion of Honor, you consent to again commence a second apprenticeship, without any other hope or any other desire than that of one day becoming useful to your fellow-creatures; this, indeed, is praiseworthy — nay, more, it is sublime.”

Albert looked on and listened with astonishment; he was not used to see Monte-Cristo give vent to such bursts of enthusiasm.

“Alas!” continued the stranger, doubtless to dispel the slight cloud that covered Morcerf’s brow, “we do not act thus in Italy; we grow according to our race and our species, and we pursue the same lines, and often the same uselessness, all our lives.”

“But monsieur,” said the Count de Morcerf, “for the man of your merit, Italy is not a country, and France opens her arms to receive you: respond to her call. France will not, perhaps, be always ungrateful! She treats her children ill, but she always welcomes strangers.”

“Ah, father!” said Albert, with a smile, “it is evident you do not know M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo; he despises all honors, and contents himself with those that are written on his passport.”

“That is the most just remark,” replied the stranger, “I ever heard made concerning myself.”

“You have been free to choose your career,” observed the Count de Morcerf, with a sigh; “and you have chosen the path strewed with flowers.”

“Precisely, monsieur,” replied Monte-Cristo, with one of those smiles that a painter could never represent or a physiognomist analyze.

“If I did not fear to fatigue you,” said the general, evidently charmed with the count’s manners, “I would have taken you to the Chamber; there is a debate very curious to those who are strangers to our modern senators.”

“I shall be most grateful, monsieur, if you will, at some future time, renew your offer; but I have been flattered

with the hope of being introduced to the countess, and I will therefore wait."

"Ah! there is my mother," cried the viscount.

Monte-Cristo turned around hastily, and saw Madame de Morcerf at the entrance of the salon, at the door opposite to that by which her husband had entered, pale and motionless; when Monte-Cristo turned around, she let fall her arm, which for some unknown reason had been resting on the gilded door-post. She had been there some moments, and had overheard the last words of the visitor.

The latter rose and bowed to the countess, who inclined herself without speaking.

"Ah! good heavens, madame!" said the count, "are you unwell, or is it the heat of the room that affects you?"

"Are you ill, mother?" cried the viscount, springing towards her.

She thanked them both with a smile.

"No," returned she, "but I feel some emotion on seeing, for the first time, the man without whose intervention we should have been in tears and desolation. Monsieur," continued the countess, advancing with the majesty of a queen, "I owe to you the life of my son, and for this I bless you. Now I thank you for the pleasure you give me in thus affording me the opportunity of thanking you as I have blessed you, from the bottom of my heart."

The count bowed again, but lower than before; he was even paler than Mercedes.

"Madame," said he, "M. le comte and yourself recompense too generously a simple action. To save a man, to spare a father's feelings or a mother's sensibility, is not to do a good action, but a simple deed of humanity."

At these words, uttered with the most exquisite sweetness and politeness, Madame de Morcerf replied:

"It is very fortunate for my son, monsieur, that he found such a friend, and I thank God that things are thus."

And Mercedes raised her fine eyes to heaven with so

fervent an expression of gratitude that the count fancied he saw tears in them.

M. de Morcerf approached her.

"Madame," said he, "I have already made my excuses to M. le comte for quitting him, and I pray you to do so also. The sitting commences at two; it is now three, and I am to speak."

"Go, then, and monsieur and I will strive our best to forget your absence," replied the countess, with the same tone of deep feeling. "M. le comte," continued she, turning to Monte-Cristo, "will you do us the honor of passing the rest of the day with us?"

"Believe me, madame, I feel most grateful for your kindness, but I got out of my travelling-carriage at your door this morning, and I am ignorant how I am installed in Paris, which I scarcely know; this is but a trifling iniquity I know, but one that may be appreciated."

"We shall have this pleasure another time," said the countess; "you promise that?"

Monte-Cristo inclined himself without answering, but the gesture might pass for assent.

"I will not detain you, monsieur," continued the countess; "I would not have our gratitude become indiscreet or importunate."

"My dear count," said Albert, "I will endeavor to return your politeness at Rome, and place my coupé at your disposal until your own be ready."

"A thousand thanks for your kindness, viscount," returned the Count of Monte-Cristo, "but I suppose that M. Bertuccio has suitably employed the four hours and a half I have given him, and that I shall find a carriage of some sort ready at the door."

Albert was used to the count's manner of proceeding; he knew that, like Nero, he was in search of the impossible, and nothing astonished him; only wishing to judge with his own eyes how far the count's orders had been executed, he accompanied him to the door of the hotel.

Monte-Cristo was not deceived; as soon as he appeared in the Count de Morcerf's antechamber, a footman, the same who at Rome had brought the count's card to the two young men, and announced his visit, sprung into the vestibule, and when he arrived at the door, the illustrious traveller found his carriage awaiting him.

It was a coupé of Koller's building, and with horses and harness, for which Drake had, to the knowledge of all the lions of Paris, refused on the previous day seven hundred guineas.

"Monsieur," said the count to Albert, "I do not ask you to accompany me to my house, as I can only show you a habitation fitted up in a hurry, and I have, as you know, a reputation to keep up as regards not being taken by surprise. Give me, therefore, one more day before I invite you: I shall then be certain not to fail in my hospitality."

"If you ask me for a day, count, I know what to anticipate; it will not be a house I shall see, but a palace. You have decidedly some *genie* at your control."

"*Ma foi!* spread that idea," replied the Count of Monte-Cristo, putting his foot on the velvet-lined steps of his splendid carriage, "and that will be worth something to me among the ladies."

As he spoke, he sprung into the vehicle, the door was closed, but not so rapidly but Monte-Cristo perceived the almost imperceptible movement which stirred the curtains of the apartment in which he had left Madame de Morcerf.

When Albert returned to his mother, he found her in the boudoir, reclining in a large velvet armchair; the whole room so obscure that only the shining spangles, fastened here and there to the drapery, and the angels of the gilded frames of the pictures gave a kind of light to the room. Albert could not see the countenance of the countess, which was lost in a thin veil she had put on her head, and which descended around her features like a cloud of vapor, but it seemed to him as though her voice

had altered. He could distinguish amidst the perfumes of the roses and heliotropes in the flower-stands the sharp and fragrant odor of volatile salts, and he remarked in one of the chased cups on the mantel-piece the countess's smelling-bottle, taken from its shagreen case, and exclaimed in a tone of uneasiness, as he entered:—

“My dear mother, have you been unwell during my absence?”

“No, no, Albert! but you know these roses, tuberoses, and orange-flowers throw out at first, before one is used to them, such violent perfumes.”

“Then, my dear mother,” said Albert, putting his hand to the bell, “they must be taken to the antechamber. You are really unwell, and just now were so pale as you came into the room——”

“Was I pale, Albert?”

“Yes; a paleness that suits you admirably, mother; but which did not the less alarm my father and myself.”

“Did your father speak of it?” inquired Mercedes, eagerly.

“No, madame; but do you not remember that he remarked the fact to you?”

“Yes; I do remember!” replied the countess.

A servant entered, summoned by Albert's ring of the bell.

“Take these flowers into the anteroom or dressing-room,” said the viscount, “they make the countess unwell.”

The footman obeyed his orders.

A long pause ensued which lasted until all the flowers were removed.

“What is this name of Monte-Cristo?” inquired the countess, when the servant had taken away the last vase of flowers; “is it a family name, or the name of the estate, or a simple title?”

“I believe, mother, it is merely a simple title. The count has purchased an island in the Tuscan Archipelago,

and, as he told you to-day, has founded a commandery. You know the same thing was done for Saint Stephen of Florence, Saint George Constantinian of Parma, and even for the order of Malta. Except this, he has no pretension to nobility, and calls himself a chance count, although the general opinion at Rome is that the count is a man of very high distinction."

"His manners are admirable!" said the countess; "at least, as far as I could judge in the few moments he remained here."

"They are perfect, mother — so perfect that they surpass by far all I have known in the leading aristocracy of the three proudest *noblesses* of Europe — the English aristocracy, Spanish aristocracy, and German aristocracy."

The countess paused a moment: then, after a slight hesitation, she resumed: —

"You have seen, my dear Albert — I ask the question as a mother — you have seen M. de Monte-Cristo in his house; you are quick-sighted, have much knowledge of the world, more tact than is usual at your age: do you think the count is really what he appears to be?"

"What does he appear to be?"

"Why, you have just said — a man of high distinction."

"I told you, my dear mother, he was esteemed such."

"But what is your own opinion, Albert?"

"I must tell you that I have not come to any decided opinion respecting him, but I think him a Maltese."

"I do not ask you of his origin, but what he is."

"Ah! what he is; that is quite another thing. I have seen so many remarkable things of him, that if you would have me really say what I think, I shall reply that I really do look upon him as one of Byron's heroes whom misery has marked with a fatal brand, — some Manfred, some Lara, some Werner, one of those wrecks, as it were, of some ancient family, who, disinherited of their patrimony, have achieved one by the force of their adventurous genius which has placed them above the laws of society."

"You say -

"I say that Monte-Cristo is an island in the midst of the Mediterranean, without inhabitants or garrison, the resort of smugglers of all nations, and pirates of every flag. Who knows whether or not these industrious worthies do not pay to their feudal lord some dues for his protection?"

"That is possible," said the countess, reflecting.

"Never mind," continued the young man, "smuggler or not, you must agree, mother dear, as you have seen him, that the Count of Monte-Cristo is a remarkable man, who will have the greatest success in the salons of Paris. Why, this very morning, at my abode, he made his *entrée* amongst us by striking every man of us with amazement, not even excepting Château-Renaud."

"And what do you suppose is the count's age?" inquired Mercedes, evidently attaching great importance to this question.

"Thirty-five or thirty-six, mother."

"So young! it is impossible," said Mercedes, replying at the same time to what Albert said as well as to her own private reflection.

"It is the truth, however. Three or four times he has said to me, and certainly without the slightest premeditation, at such a period I was five years old, at another ten years old, at another twelve, and I, induced by curiosity, which kept me alive to these details, have compared the dates, and never found him inaccurate. The age of this singular man, who is of no age, is then, I am certain, thirty-five. Besides, mother, remark how vivid his eye, how raven-black his hair, and his brow, though so pale, is free from wrinkles—he is not only vigorous, but also young."

The countess bent her head as if beneath a heavy wave of bitter thoughts.

"And has this man displayed a friendship for you, Albert?" she asked, with a nervous shudder.

"I am inclined to think so."

"And — do — you — like — him ?

"Why, he pleases me in spite of Franz d'Epinay, who tries to convince me he is a being returned from the other world."

The countess shuddered.

"Albert," she said, in a voice which was altered by emotion. "I have always put you on your guard against new acquaintances. Now you are a man, and are able to give me advice: yet I repeat to you, Albert, be prudent."

"Why, my dear mother, it is necessary, in order to make your advice turn to account, that I should know beforehand what I have to distrust. The count never plays, he only drinks pure water tinged with a little sherry, and is so rich that he cannot, without intending to laugh at me, try to borrow money. What, then, have I to fear from him ?"

"You are right," said the countess, "and my fears are weakness, especially when directed against a man who has saved your life. How did your father receive him, Albert ? It is necessary that we should be more than complaisant to the count. M. de Morcerf is sometimes occupied; his business makes him reflective; and he might, without intending it ——"

"Nothing could be in better taste than my father's demeanor, madame," said Albert; "nay, more, he seemed greatly flattered at two or three compliments which the count very skilfully and agreeably paid him with as much ease as if he had known him these thirty years. Each of these little tickling arrows must have pleased my father," added Albert, with a laugh. "And thus they parted the best possible friends; and M. de Morcerf even wished to take him to the Chamber to hear the speakers."

The countess made no reply. She fell into so deep a reverie that her eyes gradually closed. The young man, standing up before her, gazed upon her with that filial affection which is more tender and endearing with children

whose mothers are still young and handsome. Then, after seeing her eyes closed, and hearing her breathe gently, he believed she had dropped asleep, and left the apartment on tiptoe, closing the door after him with the utmost precaution.

"This devil of a fellow," he muttered, shaking his head. "I said at the time he would create a sensation here, and I measure his effect by an infallible thermometer. My mother has noticed him, and he must therefore, perforce, be remarkable."

He went down to the stables, not without some slight hesitation, when he remembered that the Count of Monte-Cristo had laid his hands on a "turnout" which sent his bays down to number two in the opinion of connoisseurs.

"Most decidedly," said he, "men are not equal, and I must beg my father to develop this theorem in the Chamber of Peers."

CHAPTER XLII.

MONSIEUR BERTUCCIO.

DURING this time the count had arrived at his house; it had taken him six minutes to perform the distance; but these six minutes were sufficient to induce twenty young men, who knew the price of the equipage they had been unable to purchase themselves, to put their horses into a gallop in order to see the rich foreigner who could afford to give 20,000 francs apiece for his horses.

The house Ali had chosen, and which was to serve as a town residence to Monte-Cristo, was situated on the right hand as you ascended the Champs Elysées. A thick clump of trees and shrubs rose in the centre, and masked a portion of the front; around this shrubbery two alleys, like two arms, extended right and left, and formed a carriage-drive from the iron gates to a double portico, on every step of which stood a porcelain vase, filled with flowers. This house, isolated from the rest, had, besides the main entrance, another in the Rue Ponthieu. Even before the coachman had hailed the concierge, the massive gates rolled on their hinges; they had seen the count coming, and at Paris, as everywhere else, he was served with the rapidity of lightning. The coachman entered, and descending the half-circle without slackening his speed, the gates were closed ere the wheels had ceased to sound on the gravel. The carriage stopped at the left side of the portico; two men presented themselves at the carriage window; the one was Ali, who, smiling with an expression of the most sincere joy, seemed amply repaid by a mere look

from Monte-Cristo. The other bowed respectfully, and offered his arm to assist the count in descending.

"Thanks, Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count, springing lightly up three steps of the portico; "and the notary?"

"He is in the small salon, excellency," returned Bertuccio.

"And the cards I ordered to have engraved as soon as you knew the number of the house?"

"M. le comte, it is done already. I have been myself to the best engraver of the Palais Royal, who did the plate in my presence. The first card struck off was taken, according to your orders, to M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, No. 7; the others are on the mantel-piece of your excellency's bedroom."

"Good; what o'clock is it?"

"Four o'clock."

Monte-Cristo gave his hat, cane, and gloves to the same French footman who had called his carriage at the Count de Morcerf's, and then he passed into the small salon, preceded by Bertuccio, who showed him the way.

"These are but indifferent marbles in this antechamber," said Monte-Cristo. "I trust all this will soon be taken away."

Bertuccio bowed. As the steward had said, the notary awaited him in the small salon. He was a simple-looking lawyer's clerk, elevated to the extraordinary dignity of a provincial scrivener.

"You are the notary empowered to sell the country-house that I wish to purchase, monsieur?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Yes, M. le comte," returned the notary.

"Is the deed of sale ready?"

"Yes, M. le comte."

"Have you brought it?"

"Here it is."

"Very well; and where is this house that I purchase?"

asked the count, carelessly, addressing himself half to Bertuccio, half to the notary.

The steward made a gesture that signified, "I do not know."

The notary looked at the count with astonishment.

"What!" said he, "does not M. le comte know where the house he purchases is situated?"

"No," returned the count.

"M. le comte does not know it?"

"How should I know it? I have arrived from Cadiz this morning. I have never before been at Paris; and it is the first time I have ever even set my foot in France."

"Ah! that is different; the house you purchase is situated at Auteuil."

At these words Bertuccio turned pale.

"And where is Auteuil?" asked the count.

"Close here, monsieur," replied the notary, "a little beyond Passy — a charming situation in the heart of the Bois de Boulogne."

"So near as that?" said the count; "but that is not in the country. What made you choose a house at the gates of Paris, Monsieur Bertuccio?"

"I!" cried the steward with a strange expression. "M. le comte did not charge me to purchase this house. If M. le comte will recollect — if he will think ——"

"Ah, true," observed Monte-Cristo; "I recollect now. I read the advertisement in one of the papers, and was tempted by the false title, 'a country-house.'"

"It is not yet too late," cried Bertuccio, eagerly; "and if your excellency will entrust me with the commission, I will find you a better at Enghien, at Fontenay-aux-Roses, or at Bellevue."

"Oh, no," returned Monte-Cristo, negligently; "since I have this, I will keep it."

"And you are quite right," said the notary, who feared to lose his fee. "It is a charming place, well supplied with spring water and fine trees; a comfortable habitation,

although abandoned for a long time; without reckoning the furniture, which, although old, is yet valuable, now that old things are so much sought after. I suppose M. le comte has the tastes of the day?"

"To be sure," returned Monte-Cristo; "it is very convenient, then?"

"It is more — it is magnificent."

"*Peste!* let us not lose such an opportunity," returned Monte-Cristo. "The deed, if you please, M. le notaire." And he signed it rapidly, after having first run his eye over that part of the deed in which were specified the situation of the house and the names of the proprietors.

"Bertuccio," said he, "give 55,000 francs to monsieur."

The steward left the room with a faltering step, and returned with a bundle of bank-notes, which the notary counted like a man who never gives a receipt for money until after legal examination.

"And now," demanded the count, "are all the forms complied with?"

"All, M. le comte."

"Have you the keys?"

"They are in the hands of the concierge, who takes care of the house; but here is the order I have given him to install monsieur le comte in his new possession."

"Very well;" and Monte-Cristo made a sign with his hand to the notary, which said, "I have no further need of you; you may go."

"But," observed the honest notary, "you are mistaken, I think, M. le comte; it is only 50,000 francs, everything included."

"And your fee?"

"Is included in this sum."

"But have you not come from Auteuil here?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, it is but fair that you should be paid for your loss of time and trouble," said the count, and he made a gesture of polite dismissal.

The notary left the room backwards, and bowing down to the ground; it was the first time he had ever met a similar client.

"See this gentleman out," said the count to Bertuccio. And the steward followed the notary out of the room.

Scarcely was the count alone, when he drew from his pocket a book closed with a lock, and opened it with a key which he wore around his neck, and which never left him. After having sought for a few minutes, he stopped at a leaf which had several notes, and compared them with the deed of sale which lay on the table, and recalling his *souvenirs* :

"'Auteuil, Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28;' it is indeed the same," said he; "and now, am I to rely upon an avowal extorted by religious or physical terror? However, in an hour I shall know all."

"Bertuccio!" cried he, striking a light hammer with a pliant handle on a small gong. "Bertuccio!"

The steward appeared at the door.

"Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count, "did you never tell me that you had travelled in France?"

"In some parts of France — yes, excellency."

"You know the environs of Paris, then?"

"No, excellency, no," returned the steward, with a sort of nervous trembling, which Monte-Cristo, a connoisseur in all emotions, rightly attributed to great disquietude.

"It is unfortunate," returned he, "that you have never visited the environs, for I wish to see my new property this evening, and had you gone with me, you could have given me some useful information."

"To Auteuil!" cried Bertuccio, whose copper complexion became livid. "I go to Auteuil!"

"Well, what is there surprising in that?" When I live at Auteuil, you must come there, as you belong to my service."

Bertuccio hung down his head before the imperious look of his master, and remained motionless, without making any answer.

"Why, what has happened to you? — are you going to make me ring a second time for the carriage?" asked Monte-Cristo, in the same tone that Louis XIV. pronounced the famous "I have been almost obliged to wait."

Bertuccio made but one bound to the antechamber, and cried, in a hoarse voice:

"His excellency's horses!"

Monte-Cristo wrote two or three notes, and as he sealed the last, the steward appeared.

"Your excellency's carriage is at the door," said he.

"Well, take your hat and gloves," returned Monte-Cristo.

"Am I to accompany you, M. le comte?" cried Bertuccio.

"Certainly, you must give your orders, for I intend residing at the house."

It was unexampled for a servant of the count's to dare to dispute an order of his, so the steward, without saying a word, followed his master, who got into the carriage, and signed him to follow, which he did, seating himself respectfully on the front seat.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE HOUSE AT AUTEUIL.

MONTE-CRISTO had remarked that, as they descended the staircase, Bertuccio signed himself in the Corsican manner, that is, had formed the sign of the cross in the air with his thumb, and as he seated himself in the carriage, muttered a short prayer.

Any one but a curious man would have had pity on seeing the steward's extraordinary repugnance for the count's projected drive *extra muros*; but it seemed the count was too curious to excuse Bertuccio this little journey. In twenty minutes they were at Auteuil; the steward's emotion had continued to augment as they entered the village. Bertuccio, crouched in a corner of the carriage, began to examine with a feverish anxiety every house they passed.

"Tell them to stop at Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28," said the count, fixing his eyes on the steward, to whom he gave this order.

Bertuccio's forehead was covered with perspiration, but, however, he obeyed, and, leaning out of the window, he cried to the coachman:

"Rue de la Fontaine, No. 28."

No. 28 was situated at the extremity of the village; during the drive night had set in, or rather a black cloud, charged with electricity, gave to these vapors the appearance and solemnity of a dramatic episode. The carriage stopped, the footman sprung off the box and opened the door.

"Well," said the count, "you do not get out, M. Bertuccio—you are going to stay in the carriage, then? What are you thinking of this evening?"

Bertuccio sprang out, and offered his shoulder to the count, who, this time, leaned upon it as he descended the three steps of the carriage.

"Knock," said the count, "and announce me."

Bertuccio knocked, the door opened, and the concierge appeared.

"What is it?" asked he.

"It is your new master, my good fellow," said the footman. And he held out to the concierge the notary's order.

"The house is sold, then?" demanded the concierge; "and this gentleman is coming to live here?"

"Yes, my friend," returned the count; "and I will endeavor to give you no cause to regret your old master."

"Oh, monsieur," said the concierge, "I shall not have much cause to regret him, for he came here but seldom; it is five years since he was here last, and did well to sell the house, for it did not bring him in anything at all."

"What was the name of your old master?" said Monte-Cristo.

"M. le Marquis de Saint-Meran. Ah, I am sure he has not sold the house for what he gave for it."

"The Marquis de Saint-Meran!" returned the count. "The name is not unknown to me; the Marquis de Saint-Meran!" and he appeared to meditate.

"An old gentleman," continued the concierge, "a stanch follower of the Bourbons; he had an only daughter who married M. de Villefort, who had been the procureur du roi at Nîmes, and afterwards at Versailles."

Monte-Cristo glanced at Bertuccio, who became whiter than the wall against which he leaned to prevent himself from falling.

"And is not this daughter dead?" demanded Monte-Cristo; "I fancy I have heard so."

"Yes, monsieur, one and twenty years ago; and since then we have not seen the poor marquis three times."

"Thanks, thanks," said Monte-Cristo, judging from the steward's utter prostration that he could not stretch the cord further without danger of breaking it. "Give me a light."

"Shall I accompany you, monsieur?"

"No, it is unnecessary; Bertuccio will show me the house." And Monte-Cristo accompanied these words by the gift of two pieces of gold, which produced a torrent of thanks and blessings from the concierge.

"Ah, monsieur," said he, after having vainly searched on the mantel-piece and the shelves, "I have not got any candles."

"Take one of the carriage-lamps, Bertuccio," said the count, "and show me the apartments."

The steward obeyed in silence; but it was easy to see, from the manner in which the hand that held the light trembled, how much it cost him to obey.

They went over a tolerably large ground floor, a first floor consisting of a salon, a bath-room, and two bedrooms; by one of these bedrooms they arrived at a winding staircase that opened on to the garden.

"Ah! here is a private staircase," said the count, "that is convenient. Light me, M. Bertuccio, and go first; we will see where it leads to."

"Monsieur," replied Bertuccio, "it leads to the garden."

"And, pray, how do you know that?"

"It ought to do so, at least."

"Well, let us be sure of that."

Bertuccio sighed, and went on first; the stairs led in reality to the garden. At the outer door the steward paused.

"Go on, Monsieur Bertuccio," said the count

But he to whom he spoke was stupefied, bewildered, stunned; his haggard eyes glanced around, as if in the search of the traces of some terrible event, and with his clinched hands he seemed striving to shut out some horrible recollections.

"Well!" insisted the count.

"No, no," cried Bertuccio, setting down the lantern at the angle of the interior wall. "No, monsieur, it is impossible; I can go no further."

"What does this mean?" demanded the irresistible voice of Monte-Cristo.

"Why, you must see, M. le comte," cried the steward, "that this is not natural; that having a house to purchase, you purchase it exactly at Auteuil; and that purchasing it at Auteuil, this house should be No. 28 Rue de la Fontaine. Oh! why did I not tell you all? I am sure you would not have forced me to come. I hoped your house would have been some other one than this; as if there was not another house at Auteuil than that of the assassination!"

"Ah! ah!" cried Monte-Cristo, stopping suddenly, "what words did you utter? Devil of a man; Corsican that you are — always mysterious or superstitious. Come, take the lantern, and let us visit the garden; you are not afraid of ghosts with me, I hope?"

Bertuccio raised the lantern, and obeyed. The door, as it opened, disclosed a gloomy sky, in which the moon strove vainly to struggle through a sea of clouds that covered her with their sombre wave that she illumined for an instant, and was then lost in the darkness. The steward wished to turn to the left.

"No, no, monsieur," said Monte-Cristo. "What is the use of following the alleys? Here is a beautiful lawn, let us go on straight forward."

Bertuccio wiped the perspiration from his brow, but obeyed; however, he continued to take the left hand. Monte-Cristo, on the contrary, took the right hand; ar-

rived near a clump of trees, he stopped. The steward could not restrain himself.

"Move, monsieur—move away, I entreat you; you are exactly in the spot."

"What spot?"

"Where he fell."

"My dear Monsieur Bertuccio," said Monte-Cristo, laughing, "recover yourself; we are no longer at Sartene or at Corte. This is not a *maquis*, but an English garden; badly kept, I own, but still you must not calumniate it for that."

"Monsieur, I implore you, do not stay there!"

"I think you are going mad, Bertuccio," said the count, coldly. "If that is the case, I warn you, I shall have you put in a lunatic asylum."

"Alas! excellency," returned Bertuccio, joining his hands, and shaking his head in a manner that would have excited the count's laughter, had not thoughts of a superior interest occupied him, and rendered him attentive to the least revelation of this timorous conscience. "Alas! excellency, the evil has arrived!"

"M. Bertuccio," said the count, "I am very glad to tell you that whilst you gesticulate, you wring your hands and roll your eyes like a man possessed by a devil who will not leave him; and I have always remarked, that the devil most obstinate to be expelled is a secret. I knew you were a Corsican. I knew you were gloomy, and always brooding over some old history of the vendetta; and I overlooked that in Italy, because in Italy those things are thought nothing of. But in France they are considered in very bad taste; there are gendarmes who occupy themselves with such affairs, judges who condemn, and scaffolds which avenge."

Bertuccio clasped his hands, and as, in all these evolutions, he did not let fall the lantern, the light showed his pale and altered countenance. Monte-Cristo examined him with the same look that, at Rome, had viewed

the execution of Andrea, and then, in a tone that made a shudder pass through the veins of the poor steward :

"The Abbé Busoni, then, told me an untruth," said he, "when, after his journey to France, in 1829, he sent you to me, with a letter of recommendation, in which he enumerated all your valuable qualities. Well, I shall write to the abbé; I shall render him responsible for his protégé's misconduct and I shall soon know all about this assassination. Only I warn you, that when I reside in a country, I conform to all its code, and I have no wish to put myself within the compass of the French laws for your sake."

"Oh, do not do that, excellency; I have always served you faithfully," cried Bertuccio, in despair. "I have always been an honest man, and, as far as lay in my power, I have done good."

"I do not deny it," returned the count; "but why are you thus agitated? It is a bad sign; a quiet conscience does not occasion such paleness in the cheeks, and such fear in the hands of a man."

"But, M. le comte," replied Bertuccio, hesitatingly, "did not M. l'Abbé Busoni, who heard my confession in the prison at Nîmes, tell you I had a heavy reproach to make against myself?"

"Yes; but as he said you would make an excellent steward, I concluded you had stolen,—that was all."

"Oh, monsieur le comte!" returned Bertuccio, contemptuously.

"Or, as you are a Corsican, that you had been unable to resist the desire of making a *peau*, as you call it."

"Yes, my good master," cried Bertuccio, casting himself at the count's feet, "it was simply a vengeance—nothing else."

"I understand that; but I do not understand what it is that galvanizes you in this manner."

"But, monsieur, it is very natural," returned Bertuccio, "since it was in this house that my vengeance was accomplished."

"What, my house!"

"Oh, M. le comte, it was not yours then."

"Whose, then? M. le Marquis de Saint-Meran's, I think the concierge said. What had you to revenge on the Marquis de Saint-Meran?"

"Oh, it was not on him, monsieur; it was on another."

"This is strange," returned Monte-Cristo, seeming to yield to his reflections, "that you should find yourself without any preparation in a house where the event happened that caused you so much remorse."

"Monsieur," said the steward, "it is fatality, I am sure. First, you purchase a house at Auteuil; this house is the one where I have committed an assassination; you descend to the garden by the same staircase by which he descended; you stop at the spot where he received the blow; and two paces further is the grave in which he had just buried his child. This is not chance; for chance, in this case, resembles Providence too much."

"Well, M. le Corse, let us suppose it is Providence. I always suppose anything people please; and, besides, you must concede something to diseased minds. Come, collect yourself, and tell me all."

"I have never related it but once, and that was to the Abbé Busoni. Such things," continued Bertuccio, shaking his head, "are only related under the seal of confession."

"Then," said the count, "I refer you to your confessor: turn Chartreux or Trappist, and relate your secrets; but as for me, I do not like any one who is alarmed by such phantasms, and I do not choose that my servants should be afraid to walk in the garden of an evening. I confess I am not very desirous of a visit from the commissaire de police; for in Italy, justice is only paid when silent, in France she is paid only when she speaks. Peste! I thought you somewhat Corsican, a great deal smuggler, and an excellent steward; but I see you have other strings to your bow. You are no longer in my service, Monsieur Bertuccio."

"Oh, M. le comte! M. le comte!" cried the steward, struck with terror at this threat, "if that is the only reason I cannot remain in your service, I will tell all; for if I quit you, it will only be to go to the scaffold."

"That is different," replied Monte-Cristo; "but if you intend to tell an untruth, reflect it were better not to speak at all."

"No, monsieur, I swear to you, by my hopes of salvation, I will tell you all, for the Abbé Busoni himself only knew a part of my secret; but, I pray you, go away from that plane-tree: the moon is just bursting through the clouds, and there, standing where you do, and wrapped in that cloak that conceals your figure, you remind me of M. de Villefort."

"What!" cried Monte-Cristo, "it was M. de Villefort?"

"Your excellency knows him?"

"The former procureur du roi at Nîmes."

"Yes."

"Who married the Count de Saint-Meran's daughter?"

"Yes."

"Who enjoyed the reputation of being the most severe, the most upright, and most rigid magistrate on the bench?"

"Well, monsieur," said Bertuccio, "this man with this spotless reputation ——"

"Well?"

"Was a villain."

"Bah!" replied Monte-Cristo, "impossible!"

"It is as I tell you."

"Ah! really," said Monte-Cristo. "Have you the proof of this?"

"I had it."

"And you have lost it. How stupid!"

"Yes; but by careful search it might be recovered."

"Really," returned the count; "relate it to me, for it begins to interest me."

And the count, humming an air from "Lucia di Lammermoor," went to sit down on a bench, whilst Bertuccio followed him, collecting his thoughts. Bertuccio remained standing before him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE VENDETTA.

"FROM what point will I commence my story, M. le comte?" asked Bertuccio.

"From where you please," returned Monte-Cristo, "since I know nothing at all of it."

"I thought M. l'Abbé Busoni had told your excellency."

"Some particulars doubtless; but that is seven or eight years ago, and I have forgotten them."

"Then I can speak without fear of tiring your excellency."

"Go on, M. Bertuccio, you will supply the want of the evening papers."

"The story begins in 1815."

"Ah!" said Monte-Cristo, "1815 is not yesterday."

"No, monsieur; and yet I recollect all things as if they had happened but then. I had a brother—an elder brother—who was in the service of the emperor; he had become lieutenant in a regiment composed entirely of Corsicans. This brother was my only friend. We became orphans—I at five and he at eighteen. He brought me up as if I had been his son. In 1814 he married. When the emperor returned from the Island of Elba, my brother instantly joined the army, was slightly wounded at Waterloo, and retired with the army behind the Loire."

"But that is the history of the Hundred Days, M. Bertuccio," said the count; "unless I am mistaken, it has been already written."

"Excuse me, excellency, but these details are necessary, and you promised to be patient."

"Go on, I will keep my word."

"One day we received a letter. I should tell you that we lived in the little village of Rogliano, at the extremity of Cape Corse. This letter was from my brother. He told us that the army was disbanded, and that he should return by Chateauroux, Clermont-Ferrand, Le Puy, and Nîmes; and if I had any money, he prayed me to leave it for him at Nîmes, with an aubergiste with whom I had dealings."

"In the smuggling line?" said Monte-Cristo.

"Eh? M. le comte; every one must live."

"Certainly; continue."

"I loved my brother tenderly, as I told your excellency, and I resolved not to send the money, but to take it to him myself. I possessed a thousand francs. I left five hundred with Assunta, my sister-in-law, and with the other five hundred I set off for Nîmes. It was easy to do so; and as I had my boat and a lading to take in at sea, everything favored my project.

"But after we had taken in our cargo, the wind became contrary, so that we were four or five days without being able to enter the Rhone. At last, however, we succeeded, and worked up to Arles. I left the road between Bellegarde and Beaucaire, and took the road to Nîmes."

"We are getting to the story now?"

"Yes, your excellency; excuse me, but, as you will see, I only tell you what is absolutely necessary. Just at this time, the famous massacres of the South of France took place. Two or three brigands, called Trestailon, Truphemy, and Graffan, publicly assassinated everybody whom they suspected of Bonapartism. You have doubtless heard of these massacres, M. le comte?"

"Vaguely; I was far from France at that period. Go on."

"As I entered Nîmes, I literally waded in blood. At every step you encountered dead bodies and bands of the murderers, who killed, plundered, and burned. At the

sight of this slaughter and devastation I became terrified, not for myself—for I, a simple Corsican fisherman, had nothing to fear; on the contrary, that time was most favorable for us smugglers—but for my brother, a soldier of the Empire, returning from the army of the Loire, with his uniform and his epaulets, there was everything to apprehend.

“I hastened to the aubergiste. My presages had been but too true; my brother had arrived the previous evening at Nîmes, and, at the very door of the house where he was about to demand hospitality, he had been assassinated.

“I did all in my power to discover the murderers, but no one durst tell me their names, so much were they dreaded. I then thought of that French justice of which I had heard so much, and which feared nothing, and I went to the procureur du roi.”

“And this procureur du roi was named Villefort?” asked Monte-Cristo, carelessly.

“Yes, your excellency; he came from Marseilles, where he had been deputy procureur. His zeal had procured him advancement, and he was said to be one of the first who had informed the government of the departure from the Island of Elba.”

“Then,” said Monte-Cristo, “you went to him?”

“‘Monsieur,’ I said, ‘my brother was assassinated yesterday in the streets of Nîmes; I know not by whom, but it is your duty to find out. You are the head of justice here, and it is for justice to avenge those she has been unable to protect.’

“‘Who is your brother?’ asked he.

“‘A lieutenant in the Corsican battalion.’

“‘A soldier of the usurper, then?’

“‘A soldier of the French army.’

“‘Well,’ replied he, ‘he has smitten with the sword and has perished by the sword.’

“‘You are mistaken, monsieur,’ I replied; ‘he has perished by the poniard.’

“‘What do you want me to do?’ asked the magistrate.

“‘I have already told you — avenge him.’

“‘On whom?’

“‘On his murderers.’

“‘How should I know who they are?’

“‘Order them to be sought for.’

“‘Why, your brother has been involved in a quarrel, and killed in a duel. All these old soldiers commit excesses which were tolerated in the time of the emperor, but which are not suffered now, for the people here do not like soldiers of such disorderly conduct.’

“‘Monsieur,’ I replied, ‘it is not for myself that I entreat your interference—I should grieve for him or avenge him; but my poor brother had a wife, and were anything to happen to me, the poor creature would perish from want, for my brother’s pay alone kept her. Pray, try and obtain a small government pension for her.’

“‘Every revolution has its catastrophes,’ returned M. de Villefort. ‘Your brother has been the victim of this; it is a misfortune, and government owes nothing to his family. If we are to judge by all the vengeance that the followers of the usurper exercised on the partisans of the king, when, in their turn, they were in power, your brother would be to-day, in all probability, condemned to death; what has happened is quite natural, and is only the law of reprisals.’

“‘What!’ cried I, ‘do you, a magistrate, speak thus to me?’

“‘All these Corsicans are mad, on my honor,’ replied M. de Villefort; ‘they fancy that their countryman is still emperor. You have mistaken the time; you should have told me this two months ago; it is too late now. Depart instantly, or I will compel you to do so.’

“I looked at him an instant to see if, by renewed entreaties, there was anything to hope.

“But this man was of stone. I approached him and said in a low voice:

“Well, since you know the Corsicans so well, you know that they always keep their word. You think that it was a good deed to kill my brother, who was a Bonapartist, because you are a royalist! Well! I, who am a Bonapartist also, declare one thing to you, which is that I will kill you; from this moment I declare the vendetta against you: so protect yourself as well as you can, for the next time we meet your last hour has come.’

“And before he had recovered from his surprise, I opened the door and left the room.”

“Ah! ah!” said Monte-Cristo. “With your innocent appearance you do those things, M. Bertuccio; and to a procureur du roi! Moreover, did he know what was meant by this terrible word ‘vendetta’?”

“He knew so well, that from this moment he shut himself in his house, and never went out unattended, seeking me high and low. Fortunately I was so well concealed that he could not find me.

“Then he became alarmed, and dared not reside any longer at Nîmes, so he solicited a change of residence, and as he was in reality very influential, he was nominated to Versailles; but, as you know, a Corsican who has sworn to avenge himself cares not for distance; so his carriage, fast as it went, was never above half a day’s journey before me, who followed him on foot.

“The most important thing was, not to kill him only, for I had an opportunity of doing so a hundred times, but to kill him without being discovered—at least, without being arrested.

“I no longer belonged to myself, for I had my sister-in-law to protect and provide for. During three months I watched M. de Villefort; for three months he took not a step out of doors without my following him. At length, I discovered that he went mysteriously to Auteuil; I followed him thither, and I saw him enter the house where we now are; only, instead of entering by the great door that looks into the street, he came on horseback, or in his

carriage, left the one or the other at the little inn, and entered by the gate you see there!"

Monte-Cristo made a sign with his head that he could discern amidst the darkness the door to which Bertuccio alluded.

"As I had nothing more to do at Versailles, I went to Auteuil, and gained all the information I could. If I wished to surprise him, it was evident this was the spot to lie in wait for him. The house belonged, as the concierge informed your excellency, to M. de Saint-Meran, Villefort's father-in-law; M. de Saint-Meran lived at Marseilles, so that his country-house was useless to him, and it was reported to be let to a young widow, known only by the name of the baroness.

"One evening, as I was looking over the wall, I saw a young and handsome woman, who was walking alone in this garden, which was not overlooked by any of my windows, and I guessed that she was awaiting M. de Villefort. When she was sufficiently near to distinguish her features, I saw she was from eighteen to nineteen, tall and very fair. As she had a loose dress on, and as nothing concealed her figure, I saw she would ere long become a mother. A few moments after, the little door was opened and a man entered; the young female hastened to meet him; they threw themselves into each other's arms, embraced tenderly, and returned together to the house. This man was M. de Villefort; I fully believed that when he went out in the night he would be forced to traverse the whole of the garden alone."

"And," asked the count, "did you ever know the name of this woman?"

"No, excellency," returned Bertuccio; "you will see I had no time to learn it."

"Go on."

"That evening," continued Bertuccio, "I could have killed the procureur du roi, but as I was not sufficiently master of the localities, I was fearful of not killing him on

the spot, and that should his cries give the alarm, I could not escape. I put it off until the next occasion, and in order that nothing should escape me, I took a chamber looking into the street along which ran the wall of the garden.

"Three days after, about seven o'clock in the evening, I saw a servant on horseback leave the house at full gallop, and take the road that led to Sevres. I conjectured he was going to Versailles, and I was not deceived. Three hours after, the man returned, covered with dust; his errand was performed, and ten minutes after, another man, on foot, muffled in a mantle, opened the little door of the garden, which he closed after him. I descended rapidly; although I had not seen Villefort's face, I recognized him by the beating of my heart. I crossed the street, and stopped at a post placed at the angle of the wall, and by means of which I once before looked into the garden. This time I did not content myself with looking, but I took my knife out of my pocket, felt that the point was sharp, and sprung over the wall. My first care was to run to the door; he had left the key in it, taking the simple precaution of turning it twice in the lock. Nothing then preventing my escape by this means, I examined the localities. The garden formed a long square, a terrace of smooth turf extended in the middle, and at the corners were tufts with thick and massy foliage, that mingled with the shrubs and flowers.

"In order to go from the door to the house, or from the house to the door, M. de Villefort was compelled to pass by one of these clumps.

"It was the end of September; the wind blew violently. The faint glimpses of a pale moon, hidden at every instant by the masses of dark clouds that were sweeping across the sky, whitened the gravelled walks that led to the house, but were unable to pierce the obscurity of the thick shrubberies, in which a man could conceal himself without any fear of discovery. I hid myself in the one nearest to

the path Villefort must take; and scarcely was I there than, amidst the gusts of wind, I fancied I heard groans; but you know, or rather you do not know, M. le comte, that he who is about to commit an assassination fancies he hears low cries perpetually ringing in his ears. Two hours passed thus, during which I imagined I heard these moans repeated. Midnight struck. As the last stroke died away, I saw a faint light shine through the windows of the private staircase by which we have just descended. The door opened, and the man in the mantle reappeared. The terrible moment had come! but I had so long been prepared for it that my heart did not fail in the least; I drew my knife from my pocket again, opened it, and prepared myself to strike. The man in the mantle advanced towards me, but as he drew near I saw he had a weapon in his hand. I was afraid, not of a struggle, but of a failure. When he was only a few paces from me, I saw that what I had taken for a weapon was only a spade. I was still unable to divine for what reason M. de Villefort had this spade in his hands, when he stopped close to the clump, glanced around, and began to dig a hole in the earth. I then perceived that he had something beneath his mantle which he laid on the grass in order to dig more freely. Then, I confess, curiosity became mixed with my hatred; I wished to see what Villefort was going to do there, and I remained motionless and holding my breath. Then an idea crossed my mind, which was confirmed when I saw the procureur du roi lift from under his mantle a box, two feet long, and six or eight inches deep. I let him place the box in the hole he had made, then, whilst he stamped with his feet to remove all traces of his occupation, I rushed on him and plunged my knife into his breast exclaiming:

“‘I am Giovanni Bertuccio; thy death for my brother’s; thy treasures for his widow; thou seest that my vengeance is more complete than I had hoped.’

“I know not if he heard these words; I think he did

not, for he fell without a cry; I felt his blood gush over my face, but I was intoxicated, I was delirious, and the blood refreshed instead of burning me. In a second I had disinterred the box; then, that it might not be known I had done so, I filled up the hole, threw the spade over the wall, and rushed through the door, which I double-locked, carrying off the key."

"Ah!" said Monte-Cristo, "it seems to me this was only a murder and robbery."

"No, your excellency," returned Bertuccio; "it was a vendetta followed by a restitution."

"And was the sum a large one?"

"It was not money!"

"Ah! I recollect," replied the count; "did you not say something of an infant?"

"Yes, excellency; I hastened to the river, sat down on the bank, and with my knife forced open the lock of the box. In a fine linen cloth was wrapped a new-born child. Its purple visage, and its violet-colored hands, showed it had perished from suffocation; but as it was not yet cold, I hesitated to throw it into the water that ran at my feet; in reality, at the end of an instant I fancied I felt a slight pulsation of the heart; and as I had been assistant at the hospital at Bastia, I did what a doctor would have done—I inflated the lungs by blowing air into them, and at the expiration of a quarter of an hour I saw the breathing commence, and a feeble cry was heard. In my turn I uttered a cry, but a cry of joy. 'God has not cursed me then,' I cried; 'since he permits me to save the life of a human creature, in exchange for the life I have taken away!'"

"And what did you do with the child?" asked Monte-Cristo; "it was an embarrassing load for a man seeking to escape."

"I had not for a moment the idea of keeping it, but I knew that at Paris there was an hospital where they receive these poor creatures. As I passed the barrier, I

declared I had found this child on the road, and I inquired where the hospital was; the box confirmed my statement; the linen proved it belonged to wealthy parents; the blood with which I was covered might have proceeded from the child as well as from any one else. No objection was raised, but they pointed out to me the hospital, which was situated at the upper end of the Rue d'Enfer, and after having taken the precaution of cutting the linen in two pieces, so that one of the two letters which marked it was wrapped around the child, while the other remained in my possession, I rung the bell, and fled with all speed. A fortnight after I was at Rogliano, and I said to Assunta:

"'Console thyself, sister, Israel is dead, but he is avenged.'

"She demanded what I meant, and when I had recounted all to her:

"'Giovanni,' said Assunta, 'you should have brought this child with you; we would have replaced the parents it has lost, and have called it Benedetto, and then in consequence of this good action God would have blessed us.'"

"In reply I gave her the half of the linen I had kept in order to reclaim him if we became rich."

"What letters were marked on the linen?" said Monte-Cristo.

"An H and an N, surmounted by a baron's coronet."

"By Heaven! M. Bertuccio, you make use of heraldic terms; where did you study heraldry?"

"In your service, excellency, where everything is learned."

"Go on; I am curious to know two things."

"What are they, monseigneur?"

"What became of this little boy? for I think you told me it was a boy, Monsieur Bertuccio."

"No, excellency, I do not recollect telling you that!"

"I thought you did; I must have been mistaken!"

"No, you were not, for it was in reality a little boy;

but your excellency wished to know two things; what was the second?"

"The second was the crime of which you were accused when you asked for a confessor, and the Abbé Busoni came to visit you at your request in the prison at Nîmes."

"The story will be very long, excellency."

"What matter? you know I take but little sleep, and I do not suppose you are very much inclined for it, either."

Bertuccio bowed, and resumed his story.

"Partly to drown the recollections of the past that haunted me, partly to supply the wants of the poor widow, I eagerly returned to my trade of smuggler, which had become more easy since that relaxation of the laws which always follows a revolution. The southern districts were ill watched in particular, in consequence of the disturbances that were perpetually breaking out in Avignon, Nîmes, or Uzes. We profited by the kind of respite government gave us to make friends everywhere. Since my brother's assassination in the streets of Nîmes, I had never entered the town; the result was, the aubergiste with whom we were connected, seeing we would no longer come to him, was forced to come to us, and had established a branch to his inn, on the road from Bellagarde to Beaucaire, at the sign of the Pont du Gard. We had thus, both on the side of Aiguesmortes, Martigues, or at Bouc, a dozen places where we left our goods, and where, in case of necessity, we concealed ourselves from the gendarmes and custom-house officers. Smuggling is a profitable trade when a certain degree of vigor and intelligence is employed; as for myself, brought up in the mountains, I had double motive for fearing the gendarmes and custom-house officers, as my appearance before the judges would cause an inquiry, and an inquiry always looks back into the past. And in my past life they might find something far more grave than the selling of smuggled cigars or barrels of brandy without a permit. So, preferring death to capture, I accomplished the most astonishing deeds, and which,

more than once, showed me that the too great care we take of our bodies is the only obstacle to the success of those projects which require a rapid decision and vigorous and determined execution. In reality, when you have once devoted your life, you are no longer the equal of other men, or, rather, other men are no longer your equals; and whosoever has taken this resolution, feels his strength and resources doubled."

"Philosophy, Monsieur Bertuccio," interrupted the count; "you have done a little of everything in your life."

"Oh, excellency!"

"No, no, but philosophy at half-past ten at night is somewhat late; yet I have no other observation to make, for what you say is correct, which is more than can be said for all philosophy."

"My journeys became more and more extensive and more productive. Assunta took care of all, and our little fortune increased. One day that I was setting off on an expedition, 'Go,' said she; 'at your return I will give you a surprise.' I questioned her, but in vain; she would tell me nothing, and I departed.

"Our expedition lasted nearly six weeks; we had been to Lucca to take in oil, to Leghorn for English cottons, and we ran our cargo without opposition, and returned home full of joy.

"When I entered the house, the first thing I beheld in the centre of Assunta's chamber was a cradle, that might be called sumptuous compared with the rest of the furniture, and in it a baby of seven or eight months old; I uttered a cry of joy; the only moments of sadness I had known since the assassination of the procureur du roi were caused by the recollection that I had abandoned this child. For the assassination itself I had never felt any remorse.

"Poor Assunta had guessed all. She had profited by my absence, and furnished with the half of the linen, and having written down the day and hour at which I had deposited the child at the hospital, had set off for Paris,

and had reclaimed it. No objection was raised, and the infant was given up to her. Ah, I confess, M. le comte, when I saw this poor creature sleeping peacefully in its cradle, I felt my eyes filled with tears.

“‘Ah, Assunta,’ cried I, ‘you are an excellent woman, and Heaven will bless you.’”

“This,” said Monte-Cristo, “is less correct than your philosophy; it is only faith.”

“Alas! your excellency is right,” replied Bertuccio, “and God made this infant the instrument of our punishment. Never did a perverse nature declare itself more prematurely; and yet it was not owing to any fault in his bringing up. He was a most lovely child, with large blue eyes, of that deep color that harmonizes so well with the general fairness of the complexion; his hair, which was too light, gave his face a most singular expression, which redoubled the vivacity of his look and the malice of his smile. Unfortunately there is a proverb that says that ‘red is either altogether good or altogether bad.’ The proverb was but too correct as regarded Benedetto, and even in his infancy he manifested the worst disposition. It is true that the indulgence of his mother encouraged him. This child, for whom my poor sister would go to the town, five or six leagues off, to purchase the earliest fruits and the most tempting sweetmeats, preferred to the grapes of Palma, or the preserves of Genoa, the chestnuts stolen from a neighbor’s orchard, or the dried apples in his loft, when he could eat as well of the nuts and apples that grew in my garden.

“One day when Benedetto was about five or six, our neighbor, Wasilio, who, according to the custom of the country, never locked up his purse or his valuables — for, as your excellency knows, there are no thieves in Corsica — complained that he had lost a louis out of his purse; we thought he must have made a mistake in counting his money, but he persisted in the accuracy of his statement. One day, Benedetto, who had quitted the house since the morning, to

our great anxiety, did not return until late in the evening, dragging a monkey after him, which he said he had found chained to the foot of a tree. For more than a month past, the mischievous child, who knew not what to wish for, had taken it into his head to have a monkey. A boatman who passed by Rogliano, and who had several of these animals, whose tricks had greatly diverted him, had doubtless suggested this idea to him.

“‘Monkeys are not found in our woods chained to trees,’ said I; ‘confess how you obtained this animal.’

“Benedetto maintained the truth of what he said, and accompanied it with details that did more honor to his imagination than to his veracity. I became angry; he began to laugh; I threatened to strike him and he made two steps backward.

“‘You cannot beat me,’ said he; ‘you have no right, for you are not my father.’

“We never knew who revealed this fatal secret, which we had so carefully concealed from him; however, it was his answer, in which the child’s whole character revealed itself, that almost terrified me, and my arm fell without touching him. The boy triumphed, and this victory rendered him so audacious that all the money of Assunta, whose affection for him seemed to increase as he became more unworthy of it, was spent in caprices she knew not how to contend against, and follies she had not the courage to prevent. When I was at Rogliano, everything went on properly, but no sooner was my back turned, than Benedetto became master and everything went ill. When he was only eleven, he chose his companions from among the young men of eighteen or twenty, the worst characters in Bastia, or, indeed, in Corsica; and they had already, for some pieces of mischief, been several times threatened with a prosecution.

“I became alarmed, as any prosecution might be attended with serious consequences. I was compelled at this period to leave Corsica on an important expedition; I

reflected for a long time, and with the hope of averting some impending misfortune, I resolved that Benedetto should accompany me.

"I hoped that the active and laborious life of a smuggler, with the severe discipline on board, would have a salutary effect on his character, well-nigh, if not quite, corrupted.

"I spoke to Benedetto alone, and proposed to him to accompany me, endeavoring to tempt him by all the promises most likely to dazzle the imagination of a child of twelve years old.

"He heard me patiently, and when I had finished burst out laughing.

"'Are you mad, uncle?' (he called me by this name when he was in a good humor) 'do you think I am going to change the life I lead for your mode of existence; my agreeable indolence for the hard and precarious toil you impose on yourself? exposed to the bitter frost at night, and the scorching heat by day; compelled to conceal yourself, and when you are perceived, receive a volley of balls, and all to earn a paltry sum? Why, I have as much money as I want; mother Assunta always furnishes me when I ask for it! You see that I should be a fool to accept your offer.'

"The arguments, and this audacity, perfectly stupefied me. Benedetto rejoined his associates, and I saw him from a distance point me out to them as a fool."

"Sweet child!" murmured Monte-Cristo.

"Oh! had he been my own son," replied Bertuccio, "or even my nephew, I would have brought him back to the right road, for the knowledge that you are doing your duty gives you strength; but the idea that I was striking a child whose father I had killed, made it impossible for me to punish him. I gave my sister, who constantly defended the unfortunate boy, good advice; and as she confessed that she had several times missed money to a considerable amount, I showed her a safe place in which to conceal our little treasure for the future. My mind

was already made up. Benedetto could read, write, and cipher perfectly, for when the fit seized him, he learned more in a day than others in a week; my intention was to enter him as clerk in some ship, and without letting him know anything of my plan, to convey him some morning on board; by this means his future treatment would depend upon his own conduct.

"I set off for France after having fixed upon this plan.

"All our cargo was to be landed in the Gulf of Lyons, and this was the more difficult, since we were in 1829. The most perfect tranquillity was restored, and the vigilance of the custom-house officers was redoubled, and this strictness was increased at this time in consequence of the fair of Beaucaire.

"Our expedition commenced favorably. We anchored our bark, which had a double hold, where our goods were concealed, amidst a number of other vessels that bordered the banks of the Rhone from Beaucaire to Arles. On our arrival there we began to discharge our cargo in the night, and to convey it into the town, by the help of the aubergistes with whom we were connected. Whether success rendered us imprudent, or whether we were betrayed, I know not; but one evening, about five o'clock, our little cabin-boy hastened, breathless, to inform us that he had seen a detachment of custom-house officers advancing in our direction. It was not their vicinity that alarmed us, for detachments were constantly patrolling along the banks of the Rhone, but the care, according to the boy's account, they took to avoid being seen. In an instant we were on the alert, but it was too late; our vessel was surrounded, and amongst the custom-house officers I observed several gendarmes; and, as terrified at the sight of their uniforms as I was brave at the sight of any other, I sprung into the hold, opened a port, and dropped into the river, dived, and only rose at intervals to breathe, until I reached a cutting that led from the Rhone to the canal that runs from Beaucaire to Aiguesmortes. I was now safe, for I

could swim along the cutting without being seen, and I reached the canal in safety. I had designedly taken this direction. I have already told your excellency of an aubergiste of Nîmes, who had set up a little inn on the road from Bellegarde to Beaucaire."

"Yes," said Monte-Cristo, "I perfectly recollect him; I think he was your colleague."

"Precisely," answered Bertuccio; "but he had, seven or eight years before this period, sold his establishment to a tailor at Marseilles, who, having almost ruined himself in his old trade, wished to make a fortune in another. Of course, we made the same arrangements with the new landlord that we had with the old; and it was of this man that I intended to ask shelter."

"What was his name?" inquired the count, who seemed to become somewhat interested in Bertuccio's story.

"Gaspard Caderousse; he had married a woman from the village of Carconte, and whom we did not know by any other name than that of her village. She was suffering from marsh-fever, and seemed dying by inches. As for her husband, he was a strapping fellow of forty, or five and forty, who had more than once, in time of danger, given ample proof of his presence of mind and courage."

"And you say," interrupted Monte-Cristo, "that this took place toward the year ——"

"1829, M. le comte."

"In what month?"

"June."

"The beginning or the end?"

"The evening of the 3d."

"Ah," said Monte-Cristo, "the evening of the 3d of June, 1829. Please go on."

"It was from Caderousse that I intended demanding shelter; and, as we never entered by the door that opened on to the road, I resolved not to break through the rule, and, climbing over the garden-hedge, I crept amongst the

olive and wild-fig trees; and, fearing that Caderousse might have some one there, I entered a kind of shed in which I had often passed the night, and which was only separated from the inn by a partition, in which holes had been made in order to enable us to watch an opportunity of announcing our presence. My intention was, if Caderousse was alone, to acquaint him with my presence, finish the meal the custom-house officers had interrupted, and profit by the threatened storm to return to the Rhone, and ascertain the state of our vessel and its crew. I stepped into the shed, and it was fortunate I did so, for at that moment Caderousse entered with a stranger.

"I waited patiently, not to overhear what they said, but because I could do nothing else; besides, the same thing had occurred often before. The man who was with Caderousse was evidently a stranger to the south of France; he was one of those merchants who come to sell jewelry at the fair of Beaucaire, and who, during the month the fair lasts, and during which there is so great an influx of merchants and customers from all parts of Europe, often have dealings to the amount of 100,000 to 150,000 francs.

"Caderousse entered hastily.

"Then, seeing that the room was, as usual, empty, and only guarded by the dog, he called to his wife:

"'Hilloa! Carconte!' said he, 'the worthy priest has not deceived us; the diamond is real.'

"An exclamation of joy was heard, and the staircase creaked beneath a feeble step.

"'What did you say?' asked his wife, pale as death.

"'I say that the diamond is real, that this gentleman, one of the first jewelers of Paris, will give us 50,000 francs for it. Only in order to satisfy himself it really belongs to us, he wishes you to relate to him, as I have done already, the miraculous manner in which the diamond came into our possession; in the meantime, please to sit down, monsieur, and I will fetch you some refreshment.'

"The jeweler examined attentively the interior of the inn and visible poverty of the persons who were about to sell him a diamond that seemed to have come from the casket of a prince.

"'Relate your story, madame,' said he, wishing, no doubt, to profit by the absence of her husband, so that the latter could not influence the wife's story, to see if the two recitals tallied.

"'Oh!' returned she, 'it was a gift of Heaven! My husband was a great friend, in 1814 or 1815, of a sailor named Edmond Dantes. This poor fellow, whom Caderousse had forgotten, had not forgotten him, and, at his death, bequeathed this diamond to him.'

"'But how did he obtain it?' asked the jeweler; 'had he it before he was imprisoned?'

"'No, monsieur; but it appears that in prison he made the acquaintance of a rich Englishman; and as in prison he fell sick and Dantes took the same care of him as if he had been his brother, the Englishman, when he was set free, gave this stone to Dantes, who, less fortunate, died, and, in his turn, left it to us, and charged the excellent abbé, who was here this morning, to deliver it.'

"'The same story!' muttered the jeweler; 'and, improbable as it seems at first, the history may be true; there's only the price we are not agreed about.'

"'How not agreed about?' said Caderousse; 'I thought we agreed for the price I asked.'

"'That is,' replied the jeweler, 'I offered 40,000 francs.'

"'Forty thousand!' cried La Carconte; 'we will not part with it for that sum; the abbé told us it was worth 50,000 without the setting.'

"'What was the abbé's name?' asked the indefatigable questioner.

"'The Abbé Busoni,' said La Carconte.

"'He was a foreigner?'

"'An Italian from the neighborhood of Mantua, I believe.'

“‘Let me see this diamond again,’ replied the jeweler; ‘the first time you are often mistaken as to the value of a stone.’

“Caderousse took from his pocket a small case of black shagreen, opened and gave it to the jeweler. At the sight of the diamond, which was as large as a hazel-nut, La Carconte’s eyes sparkled with cupidity.”

“And what did you think of this fine story, eaves-dropper?” said Monte-Cristo; “did you credit it?”

“Yes, your excellency. I did not look on Caderousse as a bad man, and I thought him incapable of committing a crime, or even a theft.”

“That did more honor to your heart than to your experience, M. Bertuccio. Had you known this Edmond Dantes, of whom they spoke?”

“No, your excellency, I had never heard of him before, and never but once afterwards, and that was from the Abbé Busoni himself, when I saw him in the prison at Nîmes.”

“Go on.”

“The jeweler took the ring, and, drawing from his pocket a pair of steel pliers, and a small set of copper scales, taking the stone out of its setting, he weighed it carefully.

“‘I will give you 45,000,’ said he, ‘but not a halfpenny more; besides, as that is the exact value of the stone, I brought just that sum with me.’

“‘Oh, that’s no matter,’ replied Caderousse, ‘I will go back with you to fetch the other 5,000 francs.’

“‘No,’ returned the jeweler, giving back the diamond and the ring to Caderousse; ‘no, it is worth no more, and I am sorry I offered so much, for the stone has a flaw in it, which I had not seen. However, I will not go from my word, and I will give 45,000.’

“‘At least, replace the diamond in the ring,’ said Carconte, sharply.

“‘Ah, true,’ replied the jeweler, and he reset the stone.

“‘No matter,’ observed Caderousse, replacing the box in his pocket, ‘some one else will purchase it.’

“‘Yes,’ continued the jeweler; ‘but some one else will not be so easy as I am, or content himself with the same story. It is not natural that a man like you should possess such a diamond. He will inform against you; you would have to find the Abbé Busoni, and abbés who give diamonds worth two thousand louis are rare. Justice would seize it and put you in prison; if, at the end of three or four months, you are at liberty, the ring will be lost or a false stone worth three francs will be given you instead of a diamond worth 50,000 or perhaps 55,000 francs; but which you must allow one runs considerable risk in purchasing.’

“Caderousse and his wife looked eagerly at each other.

“‘No,’ said Caderousse, ‘we are not rich enough to lose 5,000 francs.’

“‘As you please, my dear sir,’ said the jeweler; ‘I had, however, as you see, brought you the money in bright coin.’

“And he drew from his pocket a handful of gold, which he made to sparkle in the dazzled eyes of the innkeeper, and in the other hand he held a packet of bank-notes.

“There was evidently a severe struggle in the mind of Caderousse; it was evident that the small shagreen case, which he turned and re-turned in his hand, did not seem to him commensurate in value to the enormous sum which fascinated his gaze.

“He turned towards his wife.

“‘What do you think of this?’ he asked, in a low voice.

“‘Let him have it—let him have it,’ she said; ‘if he returns to Beaucaire without the diamond, he will inform against us; and, as he says, who knows if we shall ever see the Abbé Busoni? and in all probability we shall never see him.’

“‘Well, then, so I will!’ said Caderousse; ‘so you may

have the diamond for 45,000 francs. But my wife wants a gold chain, and I want a pair of silver buckles.'

"The jeweler drew from his pocket a long flat box, which contained several samples of the articles demanded.

"'Here,' he said: 'I am very plain in my dealings — take your choice.'

"The woman selected a gold chain worth about five louis, and the husband a pair of buckles worth, perhaps, fifteen francs.

"'I hope you will not complain now,' said the jeweler.

"'The abbé told me that it was worth fifty thousand francs,' muttered Caderousse.

"'Come, come, give it to me. What a strange fellow you are!' said the jeweler, taking the diamond from his hand. 'I gave you forty-five thousand francs (that is twenty-five hundred livres) of income — a fortune such as I wish I had myself — and you are not satisfied.'

"'And the five and forty thousand francs,' inquired Caderousse, in a hoarse voice, 'where are they? Come, let us see them!'

"'Here they are,' replied the jeweler; and he counted out upon the table fifteen thousand francs in gold and thirty thousand francs in bank-notes.

"'Wait whilst I light the lamp,' said La Carconte; 'it is growing dark, and there may be some mistake.'

"In fact, the night had come on during this conversation, and with the night the storm which had been threatening for the last half-hour. The thunder was heard growling in the distance; but neither the jeweler nor Caderousse nor La Carconte seemed to heed it, absorbed as they were all three with the demon of gain. I myself felt a strange kind of fascination at the sight of all this gold and all these bank-notes; it seemed to me that I was in a dream; and, as it always happens in a dream, I felt myself riveted to the spot. Caderousse counted and again counted the gold and the notes; he then handed them to his wife, who counted and counted

them again in her turn. During this time the jeweler made the diamond play and sparkle beneath the ray of the lamp, and the gem threw out its jets of light, which made him unmindful of those which — precursors of the storm — began to play in at the windows.

“‘Well,’ inquired the jeweler, ‘is the cash all right?’

“‘Yes,’ said Caderousse. ‘Give me the pocketbook, La Carconte, and find a bag somewhere.’

“La Carconte went to a cupboard, and returned with an old leathern pocketbook, from which he took some greasy letters, and put in their place the bank-notes, and a bag, in which were at the moment two or three crowns of six livres each, and which, in all probability, formed the entire fortune of the miserable couple.

“‘There,’ said Caderousse; ‘and now, although you have wronged us of perhaps ten thousand francs, will you have your supper with us? I invite you with good-will.’

“‘Thank you,’ replied the jeweler; ‘it must be getting late, and I must return to Beaucaire; my wife will be getting uneasy.’ He drew out his watch, and exclaimed, ‘*Morbleu!* nearly nine o’clock — why, I shall not get back to Beaucaire before midnight! Good night, my dears! If the Abbé Busoni should by any accident return, think of me.’

“‘In another week you will have left Beaucaire,’ remarked Caderousse, ‘for the fair finishes in a few days.’

“‘True; but that is of no consequence. Write to me at Paris, to M. Joannes, in the Palais Royal, Stone Gallery, No. 45; I will make the journey on purpose to see him, if it is worth while.’

“At this moment there was a tremendous clap of thunder, accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid, that it quite eclipsed the light of the lamp.

“‘Oh, dear!’ exclaimed Caderousse; ‘you cannot think of going out in such weather as this!’

“‘Oh, I am not afraid of thunder!’ said the jeweler.

“‘And there are robbers,’ said La Carconte. ‘The road is never very safe during fair time.’

“‘Oh, as to robbers,’ said Joannes, ‘here is something for them;’ and he drew from his pocket a pair of small pistols, loaded to the muzzle. ‘Here,’ said he, ‘are dogs who bark and bite at the same time; they are for the first two who shall have a longing for your diamond, Daddy Caderousse.’

“Caderousse and his wife again interchanged a meaning look. It seemed as though they were both inspired at the same time with some horrible thought.

“‘Well, then, a good journey to you!’ said Caderousse.

“‘Thank ye,’ replied the jeweler. He then took his cane, which he had placed against an old cupboard, and went out. At the moment when he opened the door, such a gust of wind came in that the lamp was nearly extinguished. ‘Oh!’ said he, ‘this is very nice weather, and two leagues to go in such a storm.’

“‘Remain,’ said Caderousse. ‘You can sleep here.’

“‘Yes, do stay,’ added La Carconte, in a trembling voice; ‘we will take every care of you.’

“‘No, I must sleep at Beaucaire. So, once more, good night!’

“Caderousse followed him slowly to the threshold.

“‘I can neither see heaven nor earth!’ said the jeweler, who was outside the door. ‘Do I turn to the right or left hand?’

“‘To the right,’ said Caderousse. ‘You cannot go wrong; the road is bordered by trees on both sides.’

“‘Good — all right!’ said a voice almost lost in the distance.

“‘Close the door!’ said La Carconte; ‘I do not like the open doors when it thunders.’

“‘Particularly when there is money in the house — eh?’ answered Caderousse, double-locking the door.

“He came into the room, went to the cupboard, took the

bag and pocketbook, and both began, for the third time, to count their gold and bank-notes. I never saw such an expression of cupidity as the flickering lamp revealed in the two countenances. The woman especially was hideous. The feverish tremulousness she usually had was redoubled; her countenance had become perfectly livid, and her eyes resembled burning coals.

“‘Why,’ she inquired, in a hoarse voice, ‘did you invite him to sleep here to-night?’

“‘Why?’ said Caderousse, with a shudder; ‘why, that he might not have the trouble of returning to Beaucaire.’

“‘Ah!’ responded the woman, with an expression impossible to render; ‘I thought it was for something else.’

“‘Woman, woman! why do you have such ideas?’ cried Caderousse; ‘or if you have them, why don’t you keep them to yourself?’

“‘Well!’ said La Carconte, after a moment’s pause; ‘you are not a man!’

“‘What do you mean?’ asked Caderousse.

“‘If you had been a man, you would not have let him go from here.’

“‘Woman!’

“‘Or else he should not have reached Beaucaire.’

“‘Woman!’

“‘The road takes a turn—he is obliged to follow it, whilst alongside of the canal there is a shorter road.’

“‘Woman! you offend the *bon Dieu*! There—listen!’ And at this moment there was heard a tremendous peal of thunder, whilst the livid lightning illumined the room; and the thunder, then rolling away to a distance, seemed as if it left the cursed abode lingeringly.

“‘Mercy!’ said Caderousse, crossing himself.

“At the same moment, and in the midst of the silence so full of terror which usually follows claps of thunder, they heard a knocking at the door. Caderousse and his wife started and looked aghast at each other.

“‘Who’s there?’ cried Caderousse, rising, and drawing up in a heap the gold and notes scattered over the table, and which he covered with his two hands.

“‘It is I,’ shouted a voice.

“‘And who are you?’

“‘Eh, *pardieu*! Joannes, the jeweler!’

“‘Well, and you said I offended the *bon Dieu*,’ said Carconte, with a horrid smile. ‘Why, it is the *bon Dieu* who sends him back again.’

“Caderousse fell back, pale and breathless, in his chair.

“La Carconte, on the contrary, rose, and going with a firm step towards the door, opened it, saying, as she did so:

“‘Come in, dear M. Joannes!’

“‘*Ma foi*!’ said the jeweler, drenched with the rain, ‘it seems as if I were not to return to Beaucaire to-night. The shortest follies are best, my dear Caderousse. You offered me hospitality, and I accept it, and have returned to sleep beneath your friendly roof.’

“Caderousse stammered out some words, whilst he wiped away the damp that started to his brow. La Carconte double-locked the door behind the jeweler.”

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RAIN OF BLOOD.

"As the jeweler returned to the apartment, he cast around him a scrutinizing glance — but there was nothing to excite suspicion, if it existed not, or to confirm it, if it already awakened. Caderousse's hands still grasped his gold and bank-notes, and La Carconte called up her sweetest smiles while welcoming the re-appearance of their guest.

"*'Heyday!'* said the jeweler, *'you seem, my good friends, to have had some fears respecting the accuracy of your money, by counting it over so carefully directly I was gone.'*

"*'No, no,'* answered Caderousse, *'that was not my reason, I can assure you; but the circumstances by which we have become possessed of this wealth are so unexpected, as to make us scarcely credit our good fortune, and it is only by placing the actual proof of our riches before our eyes that we can persuade ourselves the whole affair is not a dream.'*

"The jeweler smiled.

"*'Have you any other guests in your house?'* inquired he.

"*'Nobody but ourselves,'* replied Caderousse; *'the fact is, we do not lodge travellers — indeed, our auberge is so near to the town, that nobody would think of stopping here.'*

"*'Then I am afraid I shall very much inconvenience you.'*

“‘Oh, dear me, no! — indeed, good sir, you will not,’ said La Carconte, in her most gracious manner. ‘I vow and protest your passing the night under shelter of our poor roof will not make the slightest difference in the world to us.’

“‘But where will you manage to stow me?’

“‘In the chamber overhead.’

“‘Surely that is where you yourselves sleep?’

“‘Never mind that, we have a second bed in the adjoining room.’

“Caderousse stared at his wife with much astonishment.

“The jeweler, meanwhile, was humming a song as he stood warming himself by the bright, cheering blaze of a large fagot kindled by the attentive Carconte to dry the wet garments of her guest; and this done, she next occupied herself in arranging his supper, by spreading a napkin at the end of the table, and placing on it the slender remains of their dinner, to which she added three or four fresh-laid eggs.

“Caderousse had once more parted with his treasures; the bank-notes were replaced in the pocketbook, the gold put back into the bag, and the whole carefully locked in the *armoire*, which formed his stronghold; he then commenced pacing the room with a pensive and gloomy air, glancing from time to time at the jeweler, who stood reeking with the steam from his wet clothes, and merely changing his place on the warm hearth, to enable the whole of the garments to be in turn dried by the genial heat that issued from it.

“‘Now, my dear sir,’ said La Carconte, as she placed a bottle of wine on the table, ‘supper is ready whenever you are inclined to partake of it.’

“‘But you are going to sit down with me, are you not?’ asked Joannes.

“‘I shall not take any supper to-night,’ said Caderousse.

“‘We dined so very late,’ hastily interposed La Carconte.

“‘Then it seems I am to eat alone,’ remarked the jeweler.

“‘Oh, we shall have the pleasure of waiting upon you,’ answered La Carconte, with an eager attention she was not accustomed to manifest even to guests who paid for what they took.

“From one minute to another, Caderousse darted on his wife keen, searching glances, but rapid as the lightning-flash.

“The storm still continued.

“‘There! there!’ said La Carconte; ‘do you hear that? Upon my word, you did well to return hither.’

“‘Nevertheless,’ replied the jeweler, ‘if by the time I have finished my supper, the tempest has at all abated, I shall make another attempt to complete my journey.’

“‘Oh!’ said Caderousse, shaking his head, ‘there is not the slightest chance of its abating — it is the mistral, and that will be sure to last till to-morrow morning.’

“He then sighed heavily.

“‘Well!’ said the jeweler, as he placed himself at table, ‘all I can say is, so much the worse for those who are abroad and cannot obtain a shelter.’

“‘Ah!’ chimed in La Carconte, ‘they will have a wretched night of it, be they who they may.’

“The jeweler commenced eating his supper, and the woman, who was ordinarily so querulous and indifferent to all who approached her, was suddenly transformed into the most smiling and attentive hostess. Had the unhappy man on whom she lavished her assiduities been previously acquainted with her, so sudden an alteration might well have excited suspicion in his mind, or at least have greatly astonished him.

“Caderousse, meanwhile, continued in gloomy silence to pace the room, sedulously avoiding the sight of his guest; but, as soon as the stranger had completed his

repast, the agitated aubergiste went eagerly to the door and opened it.

“‘The storm seems over,’ said he.

“But as if to contradict this statement, at that instant a violent clap of thunder seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, while a sudden gust of wind, mingled with rain, extinguished the lamp he held in his hand. Trembling and awe-struck, Caderousse hastily shut the door and returned to his guest, while La Carconte lighted a candle by the smoldering ashes that glimmered on the hearth.

“‘You must be tired,’ said she to the jeweler; ‘I have spread a pair of my finest and whitest sheets on our bed, so you have nothing to do but to sleep as soundly as I wish you may—you can find our room, it is exactly over this.’

“Joannes remained a short time listening whether the storm seemed to abate its fury, but a brief space of time sufficed to assure him that, far from diminishing, the violence of the rain and thunder momentarily increased; resigning himself, therefore, to what seemed inevitable, he bade his host good night, and mounted to his sleeping apartment. As he passed over my head, the floor seemed to creak beneath his tread, proving how slight must be the division between us. The quick, eager glance of La Carconte followed him as he ascended the staircase, while Caderousse, on the contrary, turned his back, and seemed most anxiously to avoid even glancing at him.

“All these particulars did not strike me as painfully at the time as they have since done; in fact, all that had happened (with the exception of the story of the diamond, which certainly did wear an air of improbability) appeared natural enough, and called for neither apprehension nor mistrust; but, worn out as I was with fatigue, and fully purposing to proceed onward directly the tempest abated, I determined to take advantage of the comparative silence and tranquillity that prevailed to obtain the refreshment

of a few hours' sleep. Overhead I could accurately distinguish every movement of the jeweler, who, after making the best arrangements in his power for passing a comfortable night, threw himself on his bed, and I could hear it creak and groan beneath his weight. Insensibly my eyelids grew heavy, deep sleep stole over me, and having no suspicion of anything wrong, I sought not to shake it off. For the last time I looked in upon the room where Caderousse and his wife were sitting; the former was seated upon one of those low wooden stools which in country-places are frequently used instead of chairs; his back being turned towards me, prevented me from seeing the expression of his countenance — neither should I have been able to do so had he been placed differently, as his head was buried between his two hands. La Carconte continued to gaze on him for some time in contemptuous silence; then, shrugging up her shoulders, she took her seat immediately opposite to him. At this moment the expiring embers threw up a fresh flame from the kindling of a piece of wood that lay near, and a bright gleam was thrown on the scene and the actors in it. La Carconte still kept her eyes fixed on her husband, but as he made no sign of changing his position, she extended her hard, bony hand, and touched him on the forehead.

“Caderousse shuddered! The woman's lips seemed to move, as though she were talking; but whether she merely spoke in an undertone, or that my senses were dulled by sleep, I did not catch a word she uttered. Confused sights and sounds seemed to float before me, and gradually I fell into a deep, heavy sleep. How long I had been in this unconscious state, I know not, when I was suddenly aroused by the report of a pistol, followed by a fearful cry. Weak and tottering footsteps resounded across the chamber above me, and the next instant a dull, heavy weight seemed to fall powerless on the staircase! I had not yet fully recovered my recollection, when again I heard groans, mingled with half-stifled cries, as if from persons engaged

in a deadly struggle. These evidences of the perpetration of some violent deed effectually roused me from my drowsy lethargy. Hastily raising myself on one arm, I looked around, but all was dark; and it seemed to me as if the rain must have penetrated through the flooring of the room above, for some kind of moisture appeared to fall, drop by drop, upon my forehead, and when I passed my hand across my brow, it felt wet and clammy.

“To the fearful noises that had awakened me had succeeded the most perfect silence — unbroken, save by the footsteps of a man walking about in the chamber above. By the creaking of the staircase, I judged the individual, whoever he was, was proceeding to the lower apartment. In another minute I heard some person moving there; and, looking through, I saw a man stooping towards the fire to light a candle he held in his hand. As he turned around, I recognized the features of Caderousse — pale, ghastly, and convulsed — while the front and sleeves of his dress were covered with blood! Having obtained the light he had evidently descended to seek, he hurried upstairs again, and once more I heard his rapid and uneasy step in the chamber above. Ere long he came below, holding in his hand the small shagreen case, which he opened, to assure himself it contained the diamond — seemed to hesitate as to which pocket he should put it in; then, as if dissatisfied with the security of either pocket, he deposited it in his red handkerchief, which he carefully rolled around his head. After this he took from his cupboard the bank-notes and gold he had put there, thrust the one in the pocket of his trousers, and the other into that of his waistcoat — hastily tied up a small bundle of linen, and rushing towards the door, disappeared in the darkness of the night!

“Then all became clear and manifest to me; and I reproached myself with what had happened, as though I myself had done the guilty deed. I fancied that I still heard moans, and imagining that the unfortunate jeweler

might not be quite dead, I determined to go to his relief, by way of atoning in some slight degree, not for the crime I had committed, but for that which I had not endeavored to prevent; for this purpose I applied all the strength I possessed to force an entrance from the cramped spot in which I lay, to the adjoining room; the badly arranged planks which alone divided me from it yielded to my efforts, and I found myself in the house; hastily snatching up the lighted candle, I hurried to the staircase; towards the middle of it I stumbled over a human body lying quite across the stairs. As I stooped to raise it, I discovered in the agonized features those of La Carconte.

"The pistol I had heard had doubtless been discharged at the unfortunate woman, whose throat it had frightfully lacerated, leaving a gaping wound, from which, as well as the mouth, the blood was welling in sanguinary streams.

"Finding the miserable creature past all human aid, I strode past her and ascended to the sleeping-chamber, which presented an appearance of the wildest disorder. The furniture had been knocked over in the deadly struggle that had taken place there, and the sheets, to which the unfortunate jeweler had doubtless clung, were dragged across the room; the murdered man lay on the ground, his head leaning against the wall, weltering in a gory stream, which poured forth from three large wounds in his breast; there was a fourth gash, but the blood was prevented escaping in consequence of the weapon (a large table knife) still sticking in it.

"I stumbled over some object; I stooped to examine it; it was the second pistol, which had not gone off, probably from the powder being wet. I approached the jeweler, who was not quite dead, and at the sound of my footsteps, causing as they did the creaking of the floor, he opened his eyes, fixed them on me with an anxious and inquiring gaze; moved his lips as though trying to speak, then, overcome by the effort, fell back and expired.

"This appalling sight almost bereft me of my senses, and finding that I could no longer be of service to any one in the house, my only desire was to fly from such an accumulation of horrors as quickly as I could; almost distracted, I rushed towards the staircase, clasping my burning temples with both hands, and uttering cries of horror.

"Upon reaching the room below, I found five or six custom-house officers accompanied by an armed troop of soldiery, who immediately seized me, ere, indeed, I had sufficiently collected my ideas to offer any resistance; in truth, my senses seemed to have wholly forsaken me, and when I strove to speak, a few inarticulate sounds alone escaped my lips.

"As I noticed the significant manner in which the whole party pointed to my blood-stained garments, I involuntarily surveyed myself, and then I discovered that the thick warm drops that had so bedewed me, as I lay beneath the staircase, must have been the blood of La Carconte. Paralyzed with horror, I could barely indicate by a movement of my hand the spot where I had concealed myself.

"'What does he mean?' asked a gendarme.

"One of the douaniers went to the place I directed.

"'He means,' replied the man upon his return, 'that he effected his entrance by means of this hole;' showing the place where I had broken my way through the planks into the house.

"Then, and not before, the true nature of my situation flashed on me, and I saw that I was considered the guilty author of all that had occurred; with this frightful conviction of my danger, I recovered force and energy enough to free myself from the hands of those who held me, while I managed to stammer forth:

"'I did not do it! indeed, indeed, I did not!'

"A couple of gendarmes held the muzzles of their carbines against my breast.

"'Stir but a step,' said they, 'and you are a dead man!'

“‘Why should you threaten me with death,’ cried I, ‘when I have already declared my innocence?’”

“‘Tush! tush!’ cried the men; ‘keep your innocent stories to tell to the judge at Nîmes. Meanwhile, come along with us, and the best advice we can give you is to do so unresistingly.’”

“Alas! resistance was far from my thoughts; I was utterly overpowered by surprise and terror; and without a word I suffered myself to be handcuffed and tied to a horse’s tail, in which disgraceful plight I arrived at Nîmes.

“It seems I had been tracked by a douanier, who had lost sight of me near the auberge; feeling assured that I intended to pass the night there, he had returned to summon his comrades, who just arrived in time to hear the report of the pistol, and to take me in the midst of such circumstantial proofs of my guilt as rendered all hopes of proving my innocence utterly at an end. One only chance was left me, that of beseeching the magistrate before whom I was taken to cause every inquiry to be made for an individual named the Abbé Busoni, who had stopped at the auberge of the Pont du Gard, on the morning previous to the murder. If, indeed, Caderousse had not invented the story relative to the diamond, and that there existed no such person as the Abbé Busoni, then, indeed, I was lost past redemption; or, at least, my life hung upon the feeble chance of Caderousse himself being apprehended and confessing the whole truth.

“Two months passed away in hopeless expectation on my part, while I must do the magistrate justice by declaring he used every means to obtain information of the person I declared could exculpate me if he would. Caderousse still evaded all pursuit, and I had resigned myself to what seemed my inevitable fate. My trial was to come on at the approaching sessions; when on the 8th of September, that is to say, precisely three months and five days after the events which had perilled my life, the Abbé Busoni, whom I never ventured to believe I should see, presented

himself at the prison doors, saying he understood one of the prisoners wished to speak to him; he added, that having learned the particulars of my imprisonment, he hastened to comply with my desire. You may easily imagine with what eagerness I welcomed him, and how minutely I related the whole of what I had seen and heard. I felt some degree of nervousness as I entered upon the history of the diamond; but to my inexpressible astonishment, he confirmed it in every particular, and, to my equal surprise, he seemed to place entire belief in all I stated. And then it was that, won by his mild charity, perceiving him acquainted with all the habits and customs of my own country, and considering also that pardon for the only crime of which I was really guilty might come with a double power from lips so benevolent and kind, I besought him to receive my confession, under the seal of which I recounted the affair of Auteuil, in all its details, as well as every other transaction of my life. That which I had done by the impulse of my best feelings, produced the same effect as though it had been the result of calculation. My voluntary confession of the assassination at Auteuil proved to him that I had not committed that with which I stood accused. When he quitted me, he bade me be of good courage, and rely upon his doing all in his power to convince my judges of my innocence.

"I had speedy proofs that the excellent abbé was engaged in my behalf, for the rigors of my imprisonment were alleviated by many trifling though acceptable indulgences; and I was told that my trial was to be postponed to the assizes following those now being held.

"In the interim it pleased Providence to cause the apprehension of Caderousse, who was discovered in some distant country, and brought back to France, where he made a full confession, refusing to make the fact of his wife's having suggested and arranged the murder any excuse for his own guilt. The wretched man was sentenced to the galleys for life, and I immediately set at liberty."

"And then it was, I presume," said Monte-Cristo, "that you came to me as the bearer of a letter from the Abbé Busoni?"

"It was, your excellency; the benevolent abbé took an evident interest in all that concerned me.

"‘Your mode of life as a smuggler,’ said he to me one day, ‘will be the ruin of you if you persist in it; let me advise you when you get out of prison to choose something more safe as well as respectable.’

"‘But how,’ inquired I, ‘am I to maintain myself and my poor sister?’

"‘A person, whose confessor I am,’ replied he, ‘and who entertains a high regard for me, applied to me, a short time since, to procure him a confidential servant. Would you like such a post? If so, I will give you a letter of introduction to the friend I allude to.’

"‘With thankfulness shall I profit by your permitting me to wait upon the gentleman you speak of.’

"‘One thing you must do; swear solemnly that I shall never have reason to repent my recommendation.’

"I extended my hand, was about to pledge myself by any promise he would dictate, but he stopped me.

"‘It is unnecessary for you to bind yourself by any vow,’ said he; ‘I know and admire the Corsican nature too well to fear you! Here, take this,’ continued he, after rapidly writing the few lines I brought to your excellency, and upon receipt of which you deigned to receive me into your service; and I venture most respectfully and humbly to ask whether your excellency has ever had cause to repent having done so?"

"On the contrary, Bertuccio, I have ever found you faithful, honest, and deserving. One fault I find with you, and that is, your not having placed sufficient confidence in me."

"Indeed, your excellency, I know not what you mean."

"Simply this: how comes it, that having both a sister and an adopted son, you have never spoken to me of either?"

"Alas! I have still to recount the most distressing period of my life. Anxious as you may suppose I was to behold and comfort my dear sister, I lost no time in hastening to Corsica, but when I arrived at Rogliano, I found a house of mourning and of desolation, the consequences of a scene so horrible that the neighbors remember and speak of it to this day. Acting by my advice, my poor sister had refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of Benedetto, who was continually tormenting her for money, as long as he believed there was a sou left in her possession. One morning that he had demanded money, threatening her with the severest consequences if she did not supply him with what he desired, he disappeared throughout the whole of the day, leaving the kind-hearted Assunta, who loved him as if he were her own child, to weep over his conduct and bewail his absence. Evening came, and still with all the patient solicitude of a mother she watched for his return.

"As the eleventh hour struck, he entered with a swaggering air, attended by two of the most dissolute and reckless of his ordinary companions. As poor Assunta rose to clasp her truant in her arms, forgetting all but the happiness of seeing him again, she was seized upon by the three ruffians, while the unnatural Benedetto exclaimed:

"'Come, if the old girl refuses to tell us where she keeps her money, let us just give her a taste of the torture; that will make her find her tongue, I'll engage.'

"It unfortunately happened that our neighbor, Wasilio, was at Bastia, leaving no person in his house but his wife; no human creature except she could hear or see anything that took place within our dwelling; two of the brutal companions of Benedetto held poor Assunta, who, unable to conceive that any harm was intended to her, smiled innocently and kindly in the face of those who were soon to become her executioners, while the third ruffian proceeded to barricade the doors and windows; then returning to his infamous accomplices, the three united in stifling

the cries uttered by the poor victim at the sight of these alarming preparations; this effected, they dragged the unoffending object of their barbarity towards the fire, on which they forcibly held her feet, expecting by this diabolical expedient to wring from her where her supposed treasure was secreted; in the struggles made by my poor sister, her clothes caught fire, and her fiendish and cowardly tormentors were compelled to let go their hold in order to preserve themselves from sharing the same fate. Covered with flames, Assunta rushed wildly to the door, but it was fastened; tortured by the agony she endured, the unfortunate sufferer flew to the windows, but they were also strongly barricaded; then her cries and shrieks of anguish filled the place; to these succeeded convulsive sobs and deep groans, which, subsiding in faint moans, at length died away, and all was still as the grave.

"Next morning, as soon as the wife of Wasilio could muster up courage to venture abroad, she caused the door of our dwelling to be opened by the public authorities, when Assunta, though dreadfully burned, was found still breathing; every drawer and closet in the house had been forced open, and everything worth carrying off had been stolen from them.

"Benedetto never again appeared at Rogliano, neither have I since that day either seen or heard anything concerning him.

"It was subsequently to these dreadful events that I waited on your excellency, to whom it would have been folly to have mentioned Benedetto, since all trace of him seemed entirely lost, or of my sister, since she was dead."

"And in what light did you view the tragical occurrence?" inquired Monte-Cristo.

"As a punishment for the crime I had committed," answered Bertuccio. "Oh! those Villeforts are an accursed race!"

"Truly they are," murmured the count, with a most singular expression of countenance.

"And now," resumed Bertuccio, "your excellency may perhaps be able to comprehend that this place, which I revisit for the first time — this garden, the positive scene of my crime — must have given rise to reflections of no very agreeable nature, and produced that gloom and depression of spirits which excited the notice of your excellency, who were pleased to express a desire to know the cause. At this instant, a shudder passes over me as I reflect that possibly I am now standing on the very grave in which lies M. de Villefort, by whose hand the ground was dug to receive the corpse of his child."

"It may be so," said Monte-Cristo, rising from the bench, on which he had been sitting; "but," added he in a lower tone, "whether the procureur du roi be dead or not, the Abbé Busoni did right to send you to me, and you have also acted with propriety in relating to me the whole of your history, as it will prevent my forming any erroneous opinions concerning you in the future. As for that Benedetto, who so grossly belied his name, have you never made any effort to trace out whither he has gone or what has become of him?"

"No; far from wishing to learn whither he had betaken himself, I should have shunned the possibility of meeting him, as I would a wild beast, or a savage monster. Thank God, I have never heard his name mentioned by any person, and I hope and believe he is dead."

"Flatter not yourself that such is the case," replied the count; "an all-wise Providence permits not sinners to escape thus easily from the punishment they have merited on earth, but reserves them to aid his own designs, using them as instruments whereby to work his vengeance on the guilty."

"I am content to have him live," continued Bertuccio, "so that he spares me the misery of ever again beholding him. And now, M. le comte," added the steward, bending humbly forward, "you know every secret of my life — you are my judge on earth, as the Almighty is in heaven:

have you no words of consolation to bestow on a repentant sinner?"

"My good friend, I know of none more calculated to calm the mind than the expressions employed by the Abbé Busoni when speaking of you to me. Villefort, the man you killed, merited the punishment he received at your hands, as a just reward for the wrongs he had done you, and it may be for other crimes likewise. Benedetto, if still living, will become the instrument of Divine retribution in some way or other, and then be duly punished in his turn. As far as you, yourself, are concerned, I see but one point in which you are really guilty. Ask yourself wherefore, after rescuing the infant from its living grave, you did not restore it to its mother? There was the crime, Bertuccio! that was where you really became culpable."

"True, my lord! there, as you say, I acted wickedly, and moreover cowardly. My first duty, directly I had succeeded in recalling the babe to life, should have been to have restored it to its mother; but in order to do so I must have made close and careful inquiry, which would in all probability have led to my own apprehension; and I clung to life, partly on my sister's account, and partly from that feeling of pride inborn in our hearts of desiring to come off untouched and victorious in the execution of our vengeance. Perhaps, too, the natural and instinctive love of life made me wish to avoid endangering my own. And then, again, I was not formed as brave and courageous as my poor brother."

Bertuccio hid his face in his hands as he uttered these words, while Monte-Cristo fixed on him a long and indescribable gaze.

After a brief silence, rendered still more solemn by the time and place, the count said, in a tone of melancholy wholly unlike his usual manner:

"In order to bring this conversation to a befitting termination (as I promise you never again to revert to it), I

will repeat to you some words I have heard from the lips of the Abbé Busoni himself, and which I recommend you to treasure up for your consolation — that all earthly ills yield to two all-potent remedies, time and silence. And now, leave me; I would enjoy the cool solitude of this place; the very circumstances which inflict on you, as a principal in the tragic scene enacted here, such painful emotions, are to me, on the contrary, a source of extreme delight, and serve but to enhance the value of this dwelling in my estimation. The chief beauty of trees consists in the deep shadow of their umbrageous boughs, while fancy pictures a moving multitude of shapes and forms flitting and passing beneath that shade. Here I am agreeably surprised by the sight of a garden laid out in such a way as to afford the fullest scope for the imagination, and furnished with thickly grown trees, beneath whose leafy screen a visionary like myself may conjure up phantoms at will, and revel in the dreamy reveries of his own mind; this to me, who expected but to find a blank enclosure surrounded by a straight wall, is, I assure you, a most agreeable surprise. I have no dread of supernatural things, and I have never heard it said that so much harm had been done by the dead during six thousand years as is wrought by the living in one single day. Retire within, Bertuccio, and tranquillize your mind; should your confessor be less indulgent to you in your dying moments than you found the Abbé Busoni, send for me, if I am still on earth, and I will soothe your ear with words that shall effectually calm and soothe your parting soul ere it goes forth to that 'bourne from whence no traveller returns.'"

Bertuccio bowed lowly and respectfully, and turned away, sighing heavily as he quitted his patron.

When he had quite disappeared, Monte-Cristo arose, and taking three or four steps onward, he murmured:

"Here, beneath this plane-tree, must have been where the infant's grave was dug. There is the little door

opening into the garden. At this corner is the private staircase communicating with the sleeping-apartment. There will be no necessity for me to make a note of these particulars, for there, before my eyes, beneath my feet, all around me, I have the plans sketched with all the living reality of truth."

After making the tour of the garden a second time, the count regained the house and re-entered his carriage; while Bertuccio, who perceived the thoughtful expression of his master's features, took his seat beside the driver without uttering a word. The carriage proceeded rapidly towards Paris.

That same evening, on reaching his abode in the Champs Elysées, the Count of Monte-Cristo went over the whole building with the air of one long acquainted with each nook or corner. Nor, although preceding the party, did he once mistake one door for another, or commit the smallest error when choosing any particular corridor or staircase to conduct him to a place or suite of rooms he desired to visit. Ali was his principal attendant during the somewhat late hour of his survey. Having given various orders to Bertuccio relative to the improvements and alterations he desired to make in the house, the count, drawing out his watch, said to the attentive Nubian :

"It is half-past eleven o'clock ; Haydee will not be long ere she arrives. Have all the French attendants been summoned to await her coming ?"

Ali extended his hands towards the apartments destined for the fair Greek, which were at a distance from the habitable part of the dwelling, and so effectually concealed by means of a tapestried entrance, that it would have puzzled the most curious to have divined that beyond that spot lay hid a suite of rooms, fitted up with a rich magnificence worthy of the lovely being who was to tenant them.

Ali, having pointed to the apartments, counted three on the fingers of his right hand, and then, placing it beneath his head, shut his eyes and feigned to sleep.

"I understand," said Monte-Cristo, well acquainted with Ali's pantomime: "you mean to tell me that three female attendants await their new mistress in her sleeping-chamber."

Ali, with considerable animation, made a sign in the affirmative.

"The young lady must needs be fatigued with her journey," continued Monte-Cristo, "and will, no doubt, wish to retire to rest immediately upon her arrival. Desire the French attendants not to weary her with questions, but merely pay their respectful duty and retire. You will also see that the Greek servant holds no communication with those of this country."

Ali bowed obediently and reverentially.

Just at that moment voices were heard hailing the concierge. The gate opened, a carriage rolled down the avenue and stopped at the flight of steps leading to the house. The count hastily descended, and presented himself at the already opened carriage-door, to assist a young female, completely enveloped in a mantle of green and gold, to alight.

The female raised the hand extended towards her to her lips, and kissed it with a mixture of love and respect. Some few words passed between them in that sonorous language in which Homer makes his gods converse. The female spoke with an expression of deep tenderness, while the count replied with an air of gentle gravity.

Preceded by Ali, who carried a rose-colored flambeau in his hand, the female, who was no other than the lovely Greek, who had been Monte-Cristo's companion in Italy, was conducted to her apartments, while the count retired to the pavilion reserved for himself.

In another hour every light in the house was extinguished, and it might have been thought that all its inmates slept.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UNLIMITED CREDIT.

ABOUT two o'clock the following day, a calash, drawn by a pair of magnificent English horses, stopped at the door of Monte-Cristo, and a person dressed in a blue coat, with buttons of a similar color, a white waistcoat, over which was displayed a massive gold chain, brown trousers, and a quantity of black hair, descending so low over his eyebrows as to leave it doubtful whether it were not artificial, so little did its jetty glossiness assimilate with the deep wrinkles stamped on his features—a person, in a word, who, although evidently past fifty, desired to be taken for not more than forty—bent forward from the carriage-door, on the panels of which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of a baron, and directed his groom to inquire at the porter's lodge whether the Count of Monte-Cristo resided there, and if he were within.

While waiting, the occupant of the carriage surveyed the house, the garden, so far as he could distinguish it, and the livery of the servants, who passed to and fro, with an attention so close as to be somewhat impertinent. The glance of this individual was keen, but evincing cunning rather than intelligence; his lips were straight, and so thin that, as they closed, they were compressed within the mouth; his cheek-bones were broad and projecting—a never-failing proof of audacity and craftiness—while the flatness of his forehead, and the enlargement of the back of his skull, which rose much higher than his large and vulgarly shaped ears, combined to form a physiognomy anything but prepossessing, save in the eyes of such as

considered that the owner of so splendid an equipage must needs be all that was admirable and enviable, more especially when they gazed on the enormous diamond that glittered in his shirt, and the red ribbon that depended from his buttonhole.

The groom, in obedience to his orders, tapped at the window of the porter's lodge, saying:

"Pray, does not the Count of Monte-Cristo live here?"

"His excellency does reside here," replied the concierge, "but —" added he, glancing an inquiring look at Ali.

Ali made a sign in the negative.

"But what?" asked the groom.

"His excellency does not receive visitors to-day."

"Then take my master's card. You'll see who master is — M. le Baron Danglars. Be sure to give the card to the count, and say that, although in haste to attend the Chamber, my master came out of his way to have the honor of calling upon him."

"I never speak to his excellency," replied the concierge; "the valet de chambre will carry your message."

The groom returned to the carriage.

"Well?" asked Danglars.

The man, somewhat crestfallen by the rebuke he had received, detailed to his master all that had passed between himself and the concierge.

"Bless me!" murmured M. le Baron Danglars; "this must surely be a prince instead of a count, by their styling him 'excellency' and only venturing to address him by the medium of his valet de chambre. However, it does not signify; he has a letter of credit on me, so I must see him when he requires his money."

Then, throwing himself back in his carriage, Danglars called out to his coachman, in a voice that might be heard across the road:

"To the Chambre des Députés."

Apprised in time of the visit paid him, Monte-Cristo had, from behind the blinds of his pavilion, as minutely

observed the baron, by means of an excellent lorgnette, as Danglars himself had scrutinized the house, garden, and servants.

"That fellow has a decidedly bad countenance," said the count, in a tone of disgust, as he shut up his glass into its ivory case. "How comes it that all do not retreat in aversion at the sight of that flat, receding, serpent-like forehead, round, vulture-shaped head, and sharp hooked nose, like the beak of a buzzard? Ali!" cried he, striking at the same time on the brazen gong.

Ali appeared.

"Summon Bertuccio!" said the count.

Almost immediately Bertuccio entered the apartment.

"Did your excellency desire to see me?" inquired he.

"I did," replied the count. "You no doubt observed the horses standing a few minutes since at the door?"

"Certainly, your excellency; I noticed them for their great beauty."

"Then how comes it," said Monte-Cristo, with a frown, "that when I desired you to purchase for me the finest pair of horses to be found in Paris, you permitted so splendid a couple as those I allude to to be in possession of any one but myself?"

At the look of displeasure, added to the angry tone in which the count spoke, Ali turned pale and held down his head.

"It is not your fault, my good Ali," said the count in the Arabic language, and in a tone of such gentleness as none would have given him credit for being capable of feeling,—"it is not your fault. You do not profess to understand the choice of English horses."

The countenance of poor Ali recovered its serenity.

"Permit me to assure your excellency," said Bertuccio, "that the horses you speak of were not to be sold when I purchased yours."

Monte-Cristo shrugged up his shoulders.

"It seems, M. l'intendant," said he, "that you have yet

to learn that all things are to be sold to such as care to pay the price."

"M. le comte is perhaps not aware that M. Danglars gave 16,000 francs for his horses?"

"Very well! then offer him double that sum; a banker never loses an opportunity of doubling his capital."

"Is your excellency really in earnest?" inquired the steward.

Monte-Cristo regarded the person who durst presume to doubt his words with the look of one equally surprised and displeased.

"I have to pay a visit this evening," replied he. "I desire that these horses, with completely new harness, may be at the door with my carriage."

Bertuccio bowed, and was about to retire; but when he reached the door, he paused, and then said:

"At what o'clock does your excellency wish the carriage and horses ready?"

"At five o'clock," replied the count.

"I beg your excellency's pardon," interposed the steward, in a deprecating manner, "for venturing to observe that it is already two o'clock."

"I am perfectly aware of that fact," answered Monte-Cristo, calmly. Then, turning toward Ali, he said, "Let all the horses in my stables be led before the windows of your young lady, that she may select those she prefers for her carriage. Request her, also, to oblige me by saying whether it is her pleasure to dine with me; if so, let dinner be served in her apartments. Now leave me, and desire my valet de chambre to come hither."

Scarcely had Ali disappeared than the valet entered the chamber.

"M. Baptistin," said the count, "you have been in my service one year, the time I generally give myself to judge of the merits or demerits of those about me. You suit me very well."

Baptistin bowed low.

"It only remains for me to know whether I also suit you."

"Oh, M. le comte!" exclaimed Baptistin, eagerly.

"Listen, if you please, till I have finished speaking," replied Monte-Cristo. "You receive 1,500 francs per annum for your services here, more than many a brave subaltern, who continually risks his life for his country, obtains. You live in a manner far superior to many clerks and placemen who work ten times harder than you do for their money, and certainly are quite as faithful in the discharge of their duties as you may be. Then, though yourself a servant, you have other servants to wait upon you, take care of your clothes, and see that your linen is duly prepared for you. Again, you make a profit upon each article you purchase for my toilet, amounting in the course of a year to a sum equalling your wages."

"Nay, indeed, your excellency!"

"Do not interrupt me, M. Baptistin, I am not entering into these particulars with a view to complain or reproach you; on the contrary, I see nothing unfair or unreasonable in all I have enumerated; but let your notions of gain end with the advantages you have hitherto possessed. You know as well as myself, that were I to dismiss you, it would be long indeed ere you would find so lucrative a post as that you have now the good fortune to fill. I neither ill-use nor ill-treat my servants by word or action. An error I readily forgive, but a wilful negligence or forgetfulness of my orders I never look over, and for that purpose I always endeavor, when issuing commands, to make them as short as they are clear and precise; and I would rather be obliged to repeat my words twice, or even three times, than they should be misunderstood. I am rich enough to become acquainted with whatever I desire to know, and I can promise you I am not wanting in curiosity. If, then, I should learn that you had taken upon yourself to speak of me to any one favorably or unfavorably, to comment on my actions, or watch my conduct,

that very instant you would quit my service. You may now retire. I never caution my servants a second time—remember that. You have been duly admonished, and if the warning is given in vain, you will have nobody to blame but yourself.”

Again Baptistin bowed reverentially, and was proceeding towards the door when the count bade him stay.

“I forgot to mention to you,” said he, “I lay yearly aside a certain sum for each servant in my establishment; those whom I am compelled to dismiss lose (as a matter of course) all participation in this money, while their portion goes to the fund accumulating for those domestics who remain with me, and among whom it will be divided at my death. You have been in my service a year, your fortune has commenced; do not prevent its full accomplishment by your folly.”

This address, delivered in the presence of Ali, who, not understanding one word of the language in which it was spoken, stood wholly unmoved, produced an effect on M. Baptistin only to be conceived by such as have occasion to study character and disposition of French domestics.

“I assure your excellency,” said he, “at least it shall be my study to merit your approbation in all things, and I will take M. Ali as my model.”

“Pray do no such thing,” replied the count, in the most frigid tone; “Ali has many faults mixed with most excellent qualities; he cannot possibly serve you as a pattern for your conduct, not being, as you are, a paid servant, but a mere slave—a dog! who, should he fail in his duty towards me, I should not discharge from my service, but kill!”

Baptistin opened his eyes with strong and unfeigned astonishment.

“You seem incredulous,” said Monte-Cristo, who repeated to Ali in the Arabic language what he had just been saying to Baptistin in French.

The Nubian smiled assentingly to his master's words, then, kneeling on one knee, respectfully kissed the hand of the count.

This corroboration of the lesson he had just received put the finishing stroke to the wonder and stupefaction of M. Baptistin.

The count then motioned the valet de chambre to retire, and to Ali to follow himself into the study, where they conversed long and earnestly together.

As the hand of the pendule pointed to five o'clock, the count struck thrice upon his gong. When Ali was wanted one stroke was given, two summoned Baptistin, and three Bertuccio.

The steward entered.

"My horses!" said Monte-Cristo.

"They are at the door harnessed to the carriage, as your excellency desired. Does M. le comte wish me to accompany him?"

"No, the coachman, Ali, and Baptistin will be sufficient without you."

The count descended to the door of his mansion, and beheld his carriage drawn by the very pair of horses he had so much admired in the morning as the property of Danglars. As he passed them he said:

"They are extremely handsome, certainly, and you have done well to purchase them, although you were somewhat remiss not to have procured them sooner."

"Indeed, your excellency, I had very considerable difficulty in obtaining them, and, as it is, they have cost an enormous price."

"Does the sum you gave for them make the animals less beautiful?" inquired the count, shrugging his shoulders.

"Nay, if your excellency is satisfied, all is as I could wish it. Whither does M. le comte desire to be driven?"

"To the residence of M. le Baron Danglars, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin."

This conversation had passed as they stood upon the terrace, from which a flight of stone steps led to the carriage drive. As Bertuccio, with a respectful bow, was moving away, the count called him back.

"I have another commission for you, M. Bertuccio," said he; "I am desirous of having an estate by the sea-side, in Normandy, for instance, between Havre and Boulogne. You see I give you a wide range. It will be absolutely necessary that the place you may select have a small harbor, creek, or bay, into which my vessel can enter and remain at anchor. She merely draws fifteen feet of water. She must be kept in constant readiness to sail immediately I think proper to give the signal. Make the requisite inquiries for a place of this description, and when you have met with an eligible spot, visit it, and if it possess the advantages desired, purchase it at once in your own name. The corvette must now, I think, be on her way to Fecamp, must she not?"

"Certainly, your excellency; I saw her put to sea the same evening we quitted Marseilles."

"And the yacht?"

"Was ordered to remain at Martigues."

"'Tis well! I wish you to write from time to time to the captains in charge of the two vessels, so as to keep them on the alert."

"And the steamboat? Has your excellency any orders to give respecting her?"

"She is at Chalons, is she not?"

"She is, my lord."

"The directions I gave you for the other two vessels may suffice for the steamboat also."

"I understand, my lord, and will punctually fulfil your commands."

"When you have purchased the estate I desire, I mean to establish constant relays of horses at ten leagues' distance one from the other along the northern and southern road."

"Your excellency may fully depend upon my zeal and fidelity in all things."

The count gave an approving smile, descended the terrace steps, and sprung into his carriage, which, drawn by the beautiful animals so expensively purchased, was whirled along with incredible swiftness, and stopped only before the hotel of the banker.

Danglars was engaged at that moment presiding over a railroad committee. But the meeting was nearly concluded when the name of his visitor was announced. As the count's title sounded on his ear he rose, and addressing his colleagues, many of whom were members of either Chamber, he said:

"Gentlemen, I must pray you to excuse my quitting you thus; but a most ridiculous circumstance has occurred, which is this — Thomson and French, the bankers at Rome, have sent to me a certain individual calling himself the Count of Monte-Cristo, who is desirous of opening an account with me to any amount he pleases. I confess this is the drollest thing I have ever met with in the course of my extensive foreign transactions, and you may readily suppose it has greatly aroused my curiosity; indeed, so much did I long to see the bearer of so unprecedented an order for an unlimited credit that I took the trouble this morning to call on the pretended count — for his title is a mere fiction — of that I am persuaded. We all know counts nowadays are not famous for their riches. But would you believe, upon arriving at the residence of the *soi-disant* Count of Monte-Cristo, I was very coolly informed, 'He did not receive visitors that day!' Upon my word, such airs are ridiculous, and befitting only some great millionaire or a capricious beauty. I made inquiries, and found that the house where the said count resides in the Champs Elysées is his own property, and certainly it was very decently kept up and arranged, as far as I could judge from the gardens and exterior of the hotel. But," pursued Danglars, with one of his sinister smiles, "an order for

unlimited credit calls for something like caution on the part of the banker on whom that order is given. These facts stated, I will freely confess I am very anxious to see the individual just now announced. I suspect a hoax is intended, but the good folks who thought fit to play it off on me knew but little whom they had to deal with. Well, well, we shall see. They laugh best who laugh last!"

Having delivered himself of this pompous address, uttered with a degree of energy that left the baron almost out of breath, he bowed to the assembled party and withdrew to his drawing-room, whose sumptuous fittings-up of white and gold had caused a great and admiring sensation in the *Chausée d'Antin*.

It was to this apartment he had desired his guest to be shown, fully reckoning upon the overwhelming effect so dazzling a *coup d'œil* would produce.

He found the count standing before some copies of Albano and Fattore that had been passed off to the banker as originals, but which, copies of the paintings of those great masters as they were, seemed to feel their degradation in being brought into juxtaposition with the gaudy gilding that covered the ceiling.

The count turned around as he heard the entrance of Danglars into the room.

With a slight inclination of the head, Danglars signed to the count to be seated, pointing significantly to a gilded armchair, covered with white satin embroidered with gold.

The count obeyed.

"I have the honor, I presume, of addressing M. de Monte-Cristo."

The count bowed.

"And I of speaking to Baron Danglars, Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, and Member of the Chamber of Deputies?"

With an air of extreme gravity Monte-Cristo slowly enumerated the various titles engraved on the card left at his hotel by the baron.

Danglars felt all the irony contained in the address of his visitor. For a minute or two he compressed his lips as though seeking to conquer his rage ere he trusted himself to speak.

Then, turning to his visitor, he said :

"You will, I trust, excuse my not having called you by your title when I first addressed you, but you are aware we are living under a popular form of government, and that I am myself a representative of the liberties of the people."

"So much so," replied Monte-Cristo, "that while preserving the habit of styling yourself baron, you have deemed it advisable to lay aside that of calling others by their titles."

"Upon my word," said Danglars, with affected carelessness, "I attach no sort of value to such empty distinctions, but the fact is, I was made baron, and also Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur, in consequence of some services I had rendered government, but ——"

"You have abdicated your titles, after the example set you by Messrs. de Montmorency and Lafayette? Well, you cannot possibly choose more noble models for your conduct!"

"Why," replied Danglars, "I do not mean to say I have altogether laid aside my titles; with the servants, for instance — there I think it right to preserve my rank with all its outward forms."

"I see; by your domestics you are, 'My lord!' 'M. le baron!' the journalists of the day style you 'Monsieur!' while your constituents term you 'Citizen.'"

Again Danglars bit his lips with baffled spite; he saw well enough that he was no match for Monte-Cristo in an argument of this sort, and he therefore hastened to turn to subjects more familiar to him, and calculated on having all the advantages on his side.

"Permit me to inform you, M. le comte," said he, bowing, "that I have received a letter of advice from Thomson and French of Rome."

"I am glad to hear it, M. le baron, for I must claim the privilege of so addressing you as well as your servants; I have acquired the habit of calling persons by their style and title from living in a country where barons are still met with, simply because persons are never suddenly elevated to a rank which is possessed only in right of ancestry. But as regards the letter of advice, I am charmed to find it has reached you; that will spare me the troublesome and disagreeable task of coming to you for money myself. You have received a regular letter of advice, therefore my checks will be duly honored, and we shall neither of us have to go out of our way in the transaction."

"There is one slight difficulty," said Danglars; "and that consists in my not precisely comprehending the letter itself!"

"Indeed!"

"And for that reason I did myself the honor of calling upon you, in order to beg you would explain some part of it to me."

"With much pleasure! Pray, now I am here, let me know what it was that baffled your powers of comprehension!"

"Why," said Danglars, "in the letter — I believe I have it about me" — here he felt in his breast-pocket — "yes, here it is! Well, this letter gives M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo unlimited credit on our house."

"And what is there that requires explaining in that simple fact, may I ask, M. le baron?"

"Merely the term *unlimited*; nothing else, certainly."

"Is not that word known in France? Perhaps, indeed, it does not belong to the language; for the persons from whom you received your letter of advice are a species of Anglo-Germans, and very probably do not write very choice or accurate French."

"Oh, as for the composition of the letter, there is not the smallest error in it; but as regards the competency of the document, I certainly have doubts."

"Is it possible?" asked the count, assuming an air and tone of the utmost simplicity and candor. "Is it possible that Thomson and French are not looked upon as safe and solvent bankers? Pray tell me what you think, M. le baron, for I feel uneasy, I can assure you, having some considerable property in their hands."

"Thomson and French are bankers of the highest repute," replied Danglars, with an almost mocking smile; "and it was not of their solvency or capability I spoke, but of the word *unlimited*, which, in financial affairs, is so extremely vague a term — that — that ——"

"In fact," said Monte-Cristo, "that its sense is also without limitation."

"Precisely what I was about to say," cried Danglars. "Now, what is vague is doubtful; and, says the wise man, 'where there is doubt, there is danger!'"

"Meaning to say," rejoined Monte-Cristo, "that however Thomson and French may be inclined to commit acts of imprudence and folly, M. le Baron Danglars is not disposed to follow their example."

"How so, M. le comte?"

"Simply thus: the banking-house of Thomson and Co. set no bounds to their engagements, while that of M. Danglars has its limits: truly he is wise as the sage whose prudent apothegm he quoted but just now."

"Monsieur!" replied the banker, drawing himself up with a haughty air, "the amount of my capital, or the extent and solvency of my engagements, have never yet been questioned."

"It seems, then, reserved for me," said Monte-Cristo, coldly, "to be the first to do so."

"And by what right, sir?"

"By right of the objections you have raised, and the explanations you have demanded, which certainly imply considerable distrust on your part, either of yourself or me — the former, most probably."

Again did Danglars, by a forcible effort, restrain himself

from betraying the vindictive passions which possessed his mind at this second defeat by an adversary who calmly fought him with his own weapons: his forced politeness sat awkwardly upon him, while his splenetic rage, although essaying to veil itself under a playful, jesting manner, approached at times almost to impatience. Monte-Cristo, on the contrary, preserved a graceful suavity of demeanor, aided by a certain degree of simplicity he could not assume at pleasure, and thus, calm and wholly at his ease, possessed an infinite advantage over his irascible companion.

"Well, sir," resumed Danglars, after a brief silence, "I will endeavor to make myself understood, by requesting you to inform me for what sum you propose to draw upon me?"

"Why, truly," replied Monte-Cristo, determined not to lose an inch of the ground he had gained, "my reason for desiring an 'unlimited' credit was precisely because I did not know what money I might expend."

The banker now thought it his turn to show off, and make a display of wealth and consequence; flinging himself back, therefore, in his armchair, he said, with an arrogant and purse-proud air:

"Let me beg of you not to hesitate in naming your wishes; you will then be convinced that the resources of the house of Danglars, however limited, are still equal to meeting the largest demands; and were you even to require a million ——"

"I beg your pardon!" interposed Monte-Cristo.

"I observed," replied Danglars, with a patronizing and pompous air, "that, should you be hard pressed, the concern, of which I am the head, would not scruple to accommodate you to the amount of a million."

"A million!" retorted the count; "and what use can you possibly suppose so pitiful a sum would be to me? My dear sir, if a trifle like that could suffice me, I should never have given myself the trouble of opening an account

for so contemptible an amount. A million! Excuse my smiling when you speak of a sum I am in the habit of carrying in my pocketbook or dressing-case."

And, with these words, Monte-Cristo took from his pocket a small case containing his visiting-cards, and drew forth two orders on the treasury for 500,000 francs each, payable at sight to the bearer.

A man like Danglars was wholly inaccessible to any gentler method of correction; his upstart arrogance, his ostentatious vulgarity, were only assailable by blows dealt with the force and vigor of the present *coup*; its effect on the banker was perfectly stunning; and as though scarcely venturing to credit his senses, he continued gazing from the paper to the count with a confused and mystified air.

"Come, come," said Monte-Cristo, "confess honestly that you have not perfect confidence in the responsibility of the house of Thomson and French; there is nothing very strange in your exercising what seems to you a necessary caution; however, foreseeing that such might be the case, I determined, spite of my ignorance in such matters, to be provided with the means of banishing all scruples from your mind, and at the same time leaving you quite at liberty to act as you pleased in the affair. See, here are two similar letters to that you have yourself received; the one from the house of Arstein and Eskeles of Vienna to Baron de Rothschild, the other drawn from Baring of London to M. Lafitte. Now, sir, you have but to say the word, and I will spare you all uneasiness and alarm on the subject, by presenting my letter of credit at one or the other of the establishments I have named."

The blow had struck home, and Danglars was entirely vanquished; with a trembling hand he took the two letters from Vienna and London from the count, who held them carelessly between his finger and thumb, as though to him they were mere every-day matters to which he attached but very little interest. Having carefully perused the

documents in question, the banker proceeded to ascertain the genuineness of the signatures, and this he did with a scrutiny so severe as might have appeared insulting to the count, had it not suited his present purpose to mislead the banker in every respect.

"Well, sir," said Danglars, rising, after he had well convinced himself of the authenticity of the documents he held, and bowing as though in adoration of a man the thrice happy possessor of as many orders for unlimited credit on the three principal banks of Paris, "you have there signatures worth untold wealth; although your conversation and vouchers put an end to all mistrust in the affair, you must pardon me, M. le comte, for confessing the most extreme astonishment."

"Nay, nay," answered Monte-Cristo, with the easiest and most gentlemanly air imaginable, "'tis not for such trifling sums as these to startle or astonish the banking-house of M. le Baron Danglars. Then, as all is settled as to forms between us, I will thank you to send a supply of money to me to-morrow."

"By all means, M. le comte! What sum do you want?"

"Why," replied Monte-Cristo, "since we mutually understand each other — for such I presume is the case?"

Danglars bowed assentingly.

"You are quite sure that not a lurking doubt or suspicion lingers in your mind?"

"Oh, M. le comte!" exclaimed Danglars, "I never for an instant entertained such a feeling towards you."

"No, no! you merely wished to be convinced you ran no risk, nothing more; but now that we have come to so clear an understanding, and that all distrust and suspicion are laid at rest, we may as well fix a sum as the probable expenditure of the first year — suppose we say six millions to —"

"Six millions!" gasped out Danglars, — "certainly, whatever sum you please."

"Then if I should require more," continued Monte-Cristo, in a careless and indifferent manner, "why, of course, I should draw upon you; but my present intention is not to remain in France more than a year, and during that period I scarcely think I shall exceed the sum I mentioned. However, we shall see."

"The money you desire shall be at your house by ten o'clock to-morrow morning, M. le comte," replied Danglars. "How would you like to have it? — in gold, silver, or notes?"

"Half in gold, and the other half in bank-notes, if you please," said the count, rising from his seat.

"I must confess to you, M. le comte," said Danglars, "that I have hitherto imagined myself acquainted with the degree of fortune possessed by all the rich individuals of Europe, and still wealth such as yours has been wholly unknown to me. May I presume to ask whether you have long possessed it?"

"It has been in the family a very long while," returned Monte-Cristo, "a sort of treasure expressly forbidden to be touched for a certain period of years, during which the accumulated interest has doubled the capital. The period appointed by the testator for the disposal of these riches occurred only a short time ago; and they have only been employed by me within the last few years. Your ignorance on the subject, therefore, is easily accounted for. However, you will be better informed as to me and my possessions ere long."

And the count, while pronouncing these latter words, accompanied them with one of those ghastly smiles that used to strike terror into poor Franz d'Epinay.

"With your tastes and means of gratifying them," continued Danglars, "you will exhibit a splendor that must effectually put us poor miserable millionaires quite in the background. If I mistake not, you are an admirer of paintings, at least I judged so from the attention you appeared to be bestowing on mine when I entered the

room. If you will permit me, I shall be happy to show you my picture-gallery, composed entirely of works by the ancient masters—warranted as such. Not a modern picture among them. I cannot endure the modern school of painting.”

“You are perfectly right in objecting to them, for this one great fault—that they have not yet time to become old.”

“Or will you allow me to show you several fine statues of Thorwaldsen, Bartoloni, and Canova—all foreign artists? for, as you may perceive, I think but very indifferently of our French sculptors.”

“You have a right to be unjust to your own countrymen, if such is your pleasure.”

“But perhaps you will prefer putting off your inspection of my poor pictures, etc., until another opportunity, when we shall be better known to each other. For the present I will confine myself (if perfectly agreeable to you) to introducing you to Madame la Baronne Danglars; excuse my impatience, M. le comte, but a person of your wealth and influence cannot receive too much attention.”

Monte-Cristo bowed, in sign that he accepted the proffered honor, and the financier immediately rung a small bell, which was answered by a servant in a showy livery.

“Is madame la baronne at home?” inquired Danglars.

“Yes, M. le baron,” answered the man.

“And alone?”

“No, M. le baron, madame has visitors.”

“Have you any objection to meet any person who may be with madame, or do you desire to preserve a strict incognito?”

“No, indeed,” replied Monte-Cristo, with a smile, “I do not arrogate to myself the right of so doing.”

“And who is with madame? M. Debray?” inquired Danglars, with an air of indulgence and good nature that made Monte-Cristo smile, acquainted as he was with the secrets of the banker’s domestic life.

"Yes, M. le baron," replied the servant, "M. Debray is with madame."

Danglars nodded his head; then turning to Monte-Cristo, said, "M. Lucien Debray is an old friend of ours, and private secretary to the ministre de l'interieur. As for my wife, I must tell you she lowered herself by marrying me, for she belongs to one of the most ancient families in France. Her maiden name was De Servieux, and her first husband was M. le Colonel Marquis de Nargonne."

"I have not the honor of knowing Madame Danglars, but I have already met M. Lucien Debray."

"Ah! indeed!" said Danglars, "and where was that?"

"At the house of M. de Morcerf."

"Oh! what! you are acquainted with the young viscount, are you?"

"We were together a good deal during the Carnival at Rome."

"True, true!" cried Danglars; "let me see — have I not heard talk of some strange adventure with bandits or thieves hid in ruins, and of his having had a miraculous escape? — I forget how, but I know he used to amuse my wife and daughter by telling them about it after his return from Italy."

"Madame la baronne is waiting to receive you, gentlemen," said the servant, who had gone to inquire the pleasure of his mistress.

"With your permission," said Danglars, bowing, "I will precede you to show you the way."

"By all means," replied Monte-Cristo; "I follow you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE DAPPLED GRAYS.

THE baron, followed by the count, traversed a long suite of apartments, in which the prevailing characteristics were heavy magnificence and the gaudiness of ostentatious wealth, until he reached the boudoir of Madame Danglars, a small octagonal-shaped room, hung with pink satin, covered with white Indian muslin; the chairs were of ancient workmanship and material; over the doors were painted sketches of shepherds and shepherdesses after the style and manner of Boucher; and at each side pretty medallions in crayons, harmonizing well with the fittings-up of this charming apartment, the only one throughout the vast hotel in which any distinctive taste prevailed: the truth was, it had been entirely overlooked in the plan arranged and followed out by M. Danglars and his architect, who had been selected to aid the baron in the great work of improvement he meditated, solely because he was the most fashionable and celebrated decorator of the day. The ornamental part of the fittings-up of Madame Danglars's boudoir had then been left entirely to herself and Lucien Debray. M. Danglars, however, while possessing a great admiration for the antique, as it was understood during the time of the Directory, entertained the most sovereign contempt for the simple elegance of his wife's favorite sitting-room — where, by the way, he was never permitted to intrude, unless, indeed, he excused his own appearance by ushering in some more agreeable visitor than himself; and even then he had rather the air and manner of a person who was himself introduced, than as being the

presenter of another, his reception being either cordial or frigid, in proportion as the individual who accompanied him chanced to please or displease his lady wife.

As Danglars now entered, he found madame la baronne (who, although past her first bloom of youth, was still strikingly handsome) seated at the piano, a most elaborate piece of cabinet and inlaid work, while Lucien Debray, standing before a small work-table, was turning over the pages of an album. Lucien had found time, preparatory to the count's arrival, to relate many particulars respecting him to Madame Danglars. It will be remembered that Monte-Cristo had made a lively impression on the minds of all the party assembled at the breakfast given by Albert Morcerf; and although Debray was not in the habit of yielding to such feelings, he had never been able to shake off the powerful influence excited in his mind by the impressive look and manner of the count, consequently the description given by Lucien to the baroness bore the highly colored tinge of his own heated imagination. Already excited by the wonderful stories related of the count by De Morcerf, it is no wonder that Madame Danglars eagerly listened to, and fully credited, all the additional circumstances detailed by Debray. The sound of approaching footsteps compelled the animated pair to assume an appearance of calm indifference and worldly ease; the lady flew to her piano, and her companion snatched up an album which fortunately lay near, and seemed as though really interested in its contents. A most gracious welcome and unusual smile were bestowed on M. Danglars; the count, in return for his gentlemanly bow, received a formal though graceful courtesy, while Lucien exchanged with the count a sort of distant recognition, and with Danglars a free and easy nod.

"Baroness," said Danglars, "give me leave to present to you the Count of Monte-Cristo, who has been most warmly recommended to me by my correspondents at Rome. I need but mention one fact to make all the ladies in Paris

court his notice, and that is, that the noble individual before you has come to take up his abode in our fine capital for one year, during which brief period he proposes to spend six millions of money — think of that! It sounds very much like an announcement of balls, *fêtes*, dinners, and picnic parties, in all of which I trust M. le comte will remember us, as he may depend upon it we shall him, in all the entertainments we may give, be they great or small."

Spite of the gross flattery and coarseness of this address, Madame Danglars could not forbear gazing with considerable interest on a man capable of expending six millions in twelve months, and who had selected Paris for the scene of his princely extravagance.

"And when did you arrive here?" inquired she.

"Yesterday morning, madame."

"Coming, as usual, I presume, from the extreme end of the globe? Pardon me — at least such I have heard is your custom."

"Nay, madame! this time I have merely proceeded from Cadiz hither."

"You have selected a most unfavorable moment for your first visit to our city. Paris is a horrible place in summer! Balls, parties, and *fêtes* are over; the Italian opera is in London, the French opera everywhere except at Paris. As for the Théâtre Français, you know, of course, that it is nowhere; the only amusements left us are the indifferent races held in the Champ de Mars and Satory. Do you propose entering any horses at either of these races, M. le comte?"

"I assure you, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, "my present intentions are to do whatever will tend to render my sojourn in Paris most agreeable to myself and others. I only pray I may find some kind, pitying friend who will commiserate my lamentable ignorance of such matters, and instruct me rightly to understand the habits and etiquette of this polished city."

"Are you fond of horses, monsieur le comte?"

"I have passed a considerable part of my life in the East, madame; and you are doubtless aware that the inhabitants of those climes value only two things — the fine breeding of their horses, and the beauty of their females."

"Nay, M. le comte!" said the baroness, "it would have been somewhat more gallant to have placed the ladies before the animals."

"You see, madame, how rightly I spoke when I said I required a preceptor to guide me in all my sayings and doings here."

At this instant the favorite attendant of Madame Danglars entered the boudoir; approaching her mistress, she spoke some words in an undertone."

Madame Danglars turned very pale, then exclaimed:

"I cannot believe it; the thing is impossible!"

"I assure you, madame," replied the woman, "it is even as I have said."

Turning impatiently towards her husband, Madame Danglars demanded:

"Is this true?"

"Is what true, madame?" inquired Danglars, visibly agitated.

"What my maid tells me."

"But what does she tell you?"

"That when my coachman was about to prepare my carriage, he discovered that the horses had been removed from the stables without his knowledge. I desire to know what is the meaning of this?"

"Be kind enough, madame, to listen to me," said Danglars.

"Fear not my listening — ay, and attentively, too: for in truth, I am most curious to hear what explanation you purpose offering for conduct so unparalleled. These two gentlemen shall decide between us; but, first, I will state the case to them. Gentlemen," continued the baroness, "among the ten horses in the stables of M. le Baron

Danglars, are two that belong exclusively to me — a pair of the handsomest and most spirited creatures to be found in Paris. But to you, at least, M. Debray, I need not give a further description, because to you my beautiful pair of dappled grays were well known. Well! I had promised Madame de Villefort the loan of my carriage to drive to-morrow to the Bois de Boulogne; but when my coachman goes to fetch the grays from the stables, they are gone — positively gone. No doubt M. Danglars has sacrificed them to the selfish consideration of gaining some thousands of paltry francs. Oh! how I hate and detest that money-grasping nature! Heaven defend me from all the race of mercenary speculators!”

“Madame,” replied Danglars, “the horses were not sufficiently quiet for you; they were scarcely four years old, and they made me extremely uneasy on your account.”

“Nonsense!” retorted the baroness; “you could not have entertained any alarm on the subject, because you are perfectly well aware that I have recently engaged a coachman who is said to be the best in Paris. But perhaps you have disposed of the coachman as well as the horses?”

“My dear love! pray, do not say any more about them, and I promise you another pair exactly like them in appearance, only more quiet and steady.”

The baroness shrugged up her shoulders with an air of ineffable contempt, while her husband, affecting not to observe it, turned towards Monte-Cristo, and said:

“Upon my word, M. le comte, I am quite sorry I was not sooner aware of your establishing yourself in Paris.”

“And wherefore?” asked the count.

“Because I should have liked to have made you the offer of these horses. I have almost given them away, as it is; but as I before said, I was anxious to get rid of them upon any terms. They were only fit for a young man; not at all calculated for a person at my time of life.”

"I am much obliged by your kind intentions towards me," said Monte-Cristo; "but this morning I purchased a very excellent pair of carriage-horses, and I do not think they were dear. There they are! Come, M. Debray, you are a connoisseur, I believe, let me have your opinion upon them."

As Debray walked towards the window, Danglars approached his wife.

"I could not tell you before others," said he, in a low tone, "the reason of my parting with the horses; but a most enormous price was offered me this morning for them. Some madman or fool, bent upon ruining himself as fast as he can, actually sent his steward to me to purchase them at any cost; and the fact is, I have gained 16,000 francs by the sale of them. Come, don't look so angry, and you shall have 4,000 francs of the money to do what you like with, and Eugenie shall have 2,000. There! what do you think of the affair? Wasn't I right to part with the horses?"

Madame Danglars surveyed her husband with a look of withering contempt.

"What do I see?" suddenly exclaimed Debray.

"Where?" asked the baroness.

"I cannot be mistaken; there are your horses! The very animals we were speaking of, harnessed to the count's carriage!"

"My dear, beautiful dappled grays?" demanded the baroness, springing to the window. "'Tis indeed they," said she.

Danglars looked absolutely stultified.

"How very singular!" cried Monte-Cristo, with well-feigned astonishment.

Madame Danglars whispered a few words in the ear of Debray, who approached Monte-Cristo, saying, "The baroness wishes to know what you paid her husband for the horses."

"I scarcely know," replied the count; "it was a little

surprise prepared for me by my steward; he knew how desirous I was of meeting with precisely such a pair of horses — and — so he bought them. I think, if I remember rightly, he hinted that he had given somewhere about 30,000 francs."

Debray conveyed the count's reply to the baroness.

Poor Danglars looked so crestfallen and discomfited that Monte-Cristo assumed a pitying air towards him.

"See," said the count, "how very ungrateful women are! Your kind attention in providing for the safety of the baroness by disposing of the horses, does not seem to have made the least impression on her. But so it is; a woman will often, from mere wilfulness, prefer that which is dangerous to that which is safe. Therefore, in my opinion, my dear baron, the best and easiest way is to leave them to their fancies, and allow them to act as they please; and then, if any mischief follows, why, at least, they have no one to blame but themselves."

Danglars made no reply; he was occupied in anticipations of the coming scene between himself and the baroness, whose threatening looks and frowning brow, like that of Olympic Jove, predicted a fearful storm.

Debray, who perceived the gathering clouds, and felt no desire to witness the explosion of Madame Danglars's rage, suddenly recollected an appointment which compelled him to take his leave; while Monte-Cristo, unwilling to destroy the advantages he hoped to obtain by prolonging his stay, made a farewell bow and departed, leaving Danglars to endure the angry reproaches of his wife.

"Excellent!" murmured Monte-Cristo to himself, as he retraced the way to his carriage. "All has gone according to my wishes. The domestic peace of this family is henceforth in my hands. Now, then, to play another master-stroke, by which I shall gain the heart of both husband and wife — delightful! Still," added he, "amid all this, I have not yet been presented to Mademoiselle Eugenie Danglars, whose acquaintance I should have been glad to

make. But never mind," pursued he, with that peculiar smile that at times lighted up his countenance, "it matters not for the present. I am on the spot, and have plenty of time before me — by and by will do for that part of my scheme."

The count's further meditations were interrupted by his arrival at his own abode.

Two hours afterward, Madame Danglars received a most flattering epistle from the count, in which he entreated her to receive back her favorite "dappled grays;" protesting that he could not endure the idea of making his *début* in the Parisian world of fashion with the knowledge that his splendid equipage had been obtained at the price of a lovely woman's regrets. The horses were sent back wearing the same harness they had done in the morning; the only difference consisted in the rosettes worn on the heads of the animals being adorned with a large diamond placed in the centre of each, by order of the count.

To Danglars Monte-Cristo also wrote, requesting him to excuse the whimsical gift of a capricious millionaire, and to beg of madame la baronne to pardon the Eastern fashion adopted in the return of the horses.

During the evening Monte-Cristo quitted Paris for Auteuil, accompanied by Ali.

The following day, about three o'clock, a single blow struck on the gong summoned Ali to the presence of the count.

"Ali," observed the master, as the Nubian entered the chamber, "you have frequently explained to me how more than commonly skilful you are in throwing the lasso, have you not?"

Ali drew himself up proudly, and then returned a sign in the affirmative.

"I thought I did not mistake. With your lasso you could stop an ox?"

Again Ali repeated his affirmative gesture.

"Or a tiger?"

Ali bowed his head in token of assent.

"A lion, even?"

Ali sprung forward, imitating the action of one throwing the lasso, then of a strangled lion.

"I understand," said Monte-Cristo, "you wish to tell me you have hunted the lion?"

Ali smiled with triumphant pride, as he signified that he had indeed both chased and captured many lions.

"But do you believe you could arrest the progress of two horses rushing forward with ungovernable fury?"

The Nubian smiled.

"It is well," said Monte-Cristo; "then listen to me. Ere long a carriage will dash past here, drawn by the pair of dappled gray horses you saw me with yesterday. Now, at the risk of your own life, you must manage to stop these horses before my door."

Ali descended to the street, and marked a straight line on the pavement immediately at the entrance of the house, and then pointed out the line he had traced to the count, who was watching him. The count patted him gently on the back—his usual mode of praising Ali, who, pleased and gratified with the commission assigned him, walked calmly towards a projecting stone forming the angle of the street and house, and seating himself thereon, began to smoke his chibouque, while Monte-Cristo re-entered his dwelling, perfectly assured of the success of his plan. Still, as five o'clock approached, and the carriage was momentarily expected by the count, the indication of more than common impatience and uneasiness might be observed in his manner. He stationed himself in a room commanding a view of the street, pacing the chamber with restless steps, stopping merely to listen from time to time for the sound of approaching wheels, then to cast an anxious glance on Ali. But the regularity with which the Nubian puffed forth the smoke of the chibouque proved that he, at least, was wholly absorbed in the enjoyment of his favorite occupation. Suddenly a distant sound of rapidly

advancing wheels was heard, and almost immediately a carriage appeared, drawn by a pair of wild, ungovernable horses, who rushed forward as though urged by the fiend himself, while the terrified coachman strove in vain to restrain their furious speed. In the vehicle was a female, apparently young, and a child of about seven or eight years of age. Terror seemed to have deprived them even of the power of uttering a cry, and they were clasped in each other's arms, as though determined not to be parted by death itself. The carriage creaked and rattled as it flew over the rough stones, and had it encountered the slightest impediment to its progress, it must inevitably have upset; but it still flew on, and the cries of affrighted spectators testified the universal sense of the imminent peril its occupants were threatened with.

Then Ali knew the right moment was come; and, throwing down his chibouque, he drew the lasso from his pocket — threw it so skilfully as to catch the forelegs of the near horse in its triple fold — suffered himself to be dragged on for a few steps, by which time the tightening of the well-cast lasso had so completely hampered the furious animal as to bring it to the ground, and falling on the pole, it snapped, and therefore prevented the other animal from pursuing its headlong way. Gladly availing himself of this opportunity, the coachman leaped from his box; but Ali had promptly seized the nostrils of the second horse, and held them in his iron grasp, till the maddened beast, snorting with pain, sank beside his companion. All this was achieved in much less time than is occupied in the recital. The brief space had, however, been sufficient for an individual, followed by a number of servants, to rush from the house before which the accident had occurred, and, as the coachman opened the door of the carriage, to take from it a lady who was convulsively grasping the cushions with one hand, while with the other she pressed to her bosom her young companion, who had lost all consciousness of what was passing.

Monte-Cristo carried them both to the salon, and deposited them on a sofa.

"Compose yourself, madame," said he; "all danger is over."

The female looked up at these words, and, with a glance far more expressive than any entreaties could have been, pointed to her child, who still continued insensible.

"I understand the nature of your alarm, madame," said the count, carefully examining the child; "but I assure you there is not the slightest occasion for uneasiness. Your little charge has not received the least injury — his insensibility is merely the effect of terror, and will soon cease."

"Are you quite sure you do not say so to tranquillize my fears? See how deadly pale he is! My child! my darling Edward! speak to your mother! Open your dear eyes, and look on me once again! Oh, sir, in pity, send for help! My whole fortune shall not be thought too much for the recovery of my blessed boy."

With a calm smile and gentle wave of the hand, Monte-Cristo signed to the distracted mother to lay aside her apprehensions; then opening a casket that stood near, he drew forth a vial composed of Bohemian glass, containing a liquid of the color of blood, of which he let fall a single drop on the child's lips. Scarcely had it reached them, ere the boy, though still pale as marble, opened his eyes, and eagerly gazed around him.

At this unhopd-for sight, the wild delight of the mother equalled her former despair.

"Where am I?" exclaimed she, when her first raptures at her son's recovery were past, "and to whom am I indebted for so happy a termination to my late dreadful alarm?"

"Madame," answered the count, "you are under the roof of one who esteems himself most fortunate in having been able to save you from a further continuance of your sufferings."

"My wretched curiosity has brought all this about," pursued the lady. "All Paris rung with the praises of Madame Danglars's beautiful horses, and I had the folly to desire to know whether they really merited the high character given of them."

"Is it possible," exclaimed the count, with well-feigned astonishment, "that these horses belong to madame la baronne?"

"They do indeed. May I inquire if you are acquainted with Madame Danglars?"

"I have that honor; and my happiness at your escape from the danger that threatened you is redoubled by the consciousness that I have been the unwilling and unintentional cause of all the peril you have incurred. I yesterday purchased these horses of the baron; but as the baroness evidently regretted parting with them, I ventured to send them back to her, with a request that she would gratify me by accepting them from my hands."

"You are, then, doubtless, the Count of Monte-Cristo of whom Hermine has talked to me so much?"

"You have rightly guessed, madame," replied the count.

"And I am Madame Heloise de Villefort."

The count bowed with the air of a person who hears a name for the first time.

"How grateful will M. de Villefort be for all your goodness! How thankfully will he acknowledge that to you alone it is owing that his wife and child still exist! Most certainly, but for the prompt assistance of your intrepid servant, this dear child and myself must both have perished."

"Indeed, I still shudder at the recollection of the fearful danger you were placed in, as well as your interesting child."

"I trust you will not object to my offering a recompense to your noble-hearted servant proportionate to the service he has rendered me and mine."

"I beseech you, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, "not to

spoil Ali, either by too great praise or rewards. I cannot allow him to acquire the habit of expecting to be recompensed for every trifling service he may render. Ali is my slave, and in saving your life he was but discharging his duty to me."

"Nay," interposed Madame de Villefort, on whom the authoritative style adopted by the count made a deep impression, "nay, but, consider that to preserve my life he has risked his own."

"His life, madame, belongs not to him; it is mine, in return for my having myself saved him from death."

Madame de Villefort made no further reply; her mind was utterly absorbed in the contemplation of the singular individual, who, from the first instant of her beholding him, had made so powerful an impression on her.

During the evident preoccupation of Madame de Villefort, Monte-Cristo scrutinized the features and appearance of the boy she kept folded in her arms, lavishing on him the most tender endearments. The child was small for his age, and unnaturally pale. A mass of straight black hair, defying all attempts to train or curl it, fell over his projecting forehead, and hung down to his shoulders, giving increased vivacity to the eyes already sparkling with a youthful love of mischief and fondness for every forbidden enjoyment. His mouth was large, and the lips, which had not yet regained their color, were particularly thin; in fact, the deep and crafty look, forming the principal character of the child's face, belonged rather to a boy of twelve or fourteen years of age than to one so young. His first movement was to free himself by a violent push from the encircling arms of his mother, and to rush forward to the casket from whence the count had taken the vial of elixir; then, without asking permission of any one, he proceeded, in all the wilfulness of a spoiled child unaccustomed to restrain either whims or caprices, to pull the corks out of all the bottles in the casket.

"Touch nothing, my little friend," cried the count,

eagerly; "some of those liquids are not only dangerous to taste, but even to smell."

Madame de Villefort became very pale, and, seizing her son's arm, drew him anxiously towards her; but once satisfied of his safety, she also cast a brief but expressive glance on the casket, which was not lost upon the count. At this moment Ali entered. At sight of him, Madame de Villefort uttered an expression of pleasure, and holding the child still closer towards her, she said:

"Edward, dearest! do you see that good man? He has shown very great courage and resolution, for he exposed his own life to stop the horses that were running away with us, and would certainly have dashed the carriage to pieces ere long. Thank him, then, my child, in your very best manner, for had he not come to our aid, neither you nor I would have been alive to speak our thanks."

This address, however, excited no similar feeling of gratitude on the part of the child, who, instead of obeying his mother's directions, stuck out his lips and turned away his head in a disdainful and contemptuous manner, saying:

"I don't like him — he's too ugly for me!"

The count witnessed all this with internal satisfaction, and a smile stole over his features as he thought that such a child bade fair to realize one part of his hopes; while Madame de Villefort reprimanded her son with a gentleness and moderation very far from conveying the least idea of a fault having been committed.

"This lady," said the count, speaking to Ali in the Arabic language, "is desirous that her son should thank you for saving both their lives, but the boy refuses, saying, 'You are too ugly.'"

Ali turned his intelligent countenance towards the boy, on whom he gazed without any apparent emotion; but the sort of spasmodic working of the nostrils showed to the practised eye of Monte-Cristo how deeply the Arab was wounded by the unfeeling remark.

"Will you permit me to inquire," said Madame de Villefort, as she rose to take her leave, "whether you usually reside here?"

"No, I do not," replied Monte-Cristo; "it is a small place I have purchased quite lately. My place of abode is No. 30 Avenue des Champs Elysées; but I am delighted to see your countenance seems expressive of a perfect return to tranquillity. You have quite recovered from your fright, and are, no doubt, desirous of returning home. Anticipating your wishes, I have desired the same horses you came with to be put to one of my carriages, and Ali, he whom you think so very ugly," continued he, addressing the boy with a smiling air, "will have the honor of driving you home, while your coachman remains here to attend to the necessary repairs of your calash. Directly that important business is concluded, I will have a couple of my own horses harnessed to convey it direct to Madame Danglars."

"I dare not return with those dreadful horses," said Madame de Villefort.

"You will see," replied Monte-Cristo, "that they will be as different as possible in the hands of Ali. With him they will be gentle and docile as lambs."

Ali had, indeed, given proof of this; for, approaching the animals, who had been got upon their legs with considerable difficulty, he rubbed their foreheads and nostrils with a sponge soaked in aromatic vinegar, and wiped off the sweat and foam that covered their mouths. Then commencing a loud whistling noise, he rubbed them well all over their bodies for several minutes; and, undisturbed by the noisy crowd collected around the broken carriage, Ali quietly harnessed the pacified animals to the count's chariot, took the reins in his hands, and mounted the box, when, lo! to the utter astonishment of those who had witnessed the ungovernable spirit and maddened velocity of the same horses, he was actually compelled to apply his whip in no very gentle manner ere he could induce them to start, and even then all that could be obtained from the

celebrated "dappled grays," now changed into a couple of as dull, sluggish, stupid brutes as "the most timid driver" would desire to meet with, was a slow, pottering pace, kept up with so much difficulty that Madame de Villefort was more than a couple of hours returning to her residence in the Faubourg St. Honore.

Scarcely had the first congratulations upon her miraculous escape been gone through, than she retired to her room, ostensibly for the purpose of seeking a little repose, but in reality to write the following letter to Madame Danglars:

"DEAR HERMINE, — I have just had a wonderful escape from the most imminent danger, and I owe my safety to the very Count of Monte-Cristo we were talking about yesterday, but whom I little expected to see to-day. I remember how unmercifully I laughed at what I considered your eulogistic and exaggerated praises of him, but I have now ample cause to admit that your enthusiastic description of this wonderful man fell far short of his merits. But I must endeavor to render the account of my adventures somewhat more intelligible. You must know, then, my dear friend, that when I had proceeded with your horses as far as Ranelagh, they darted forward like mad things, and galloped away at so fearful a rate, that there seemed no other prospect for myself and my poor Edward but that of being dashed to pieces against the first object that impeded their progress, when a strange-looking man, an Arab or a Nubian, at least a black of some nation or other, at a signal from the count, whose domestic he is, suddenly seized and stopped the infuriated animals, even at the risk of being trampled to death himself, and certainly he must have had a most wonderful escape. The count then hastened to us, and carried myself and son into his house, where, by some skilful application, he speedily recalled my poor Edward (who was quite insensible from terror) to life. When we were sufficiently recovered, he sent us home in his own carriage. Yours will be returned

to you to-morrow. I am fearful you will not be able to use your horses for some days; they seem thoroughly stupefied, as if sulky and vexed at having allowed this black servant to conquer them after all. The count, however, has commissioned me to assure you that two or three days' rest, with plenty of barley for their sole food during that time, will bring them back to their former fine condition, which means, I suppose, that they will be ready to run off with the carriage again, and play their wild pranks with as much headstrong fury as they evinced yesterday; do not let them endanger your life, dear Hermine, as they did mine; for Providence may not send a Monte-Cristo, or his Nubian servant, to preserve you from destruction, as it did me. Adieu! I cannot return you many thanks for the drive of yesterday; but, after all, I ought not to blame you for the misconduct of your horses, more especially as it procured me the pleasure of an introduction to the Count of Monte-Cristo — and certainly that illustrious individual, apart from the millions he is said to be so very anxious to dispose of, seemed to me one of those curiously interesting problems I, for one, delight in solving at any risk or danger. Nay, so bent am I on following up my acquaintance with this remarkable personage, that if all other means fail, I really believe I shall have to borrow your horses again and make another excursion to the Bois de Boulogne. My sweet Edward supported the accident with admirable courage. He did not utter a single cry, but fell lifeless into my arms, nor did a tear fall from his eyes after it was over. I doubt not you will consider these praises the result of blind maternal affection; but the delicate fragile form of my beloved child contains a mind of no ordinary strength with the heroic firmness of a Spartan boy. Valentine sends many affectionate remembrances to your dear Eugenie — and with best love to her and yourself, I remain,

“Ever yours truly,

“HELOISE DE VILLEFORT.”

"P. S. — Do pray contrive some means for my meeting the Count of Monte-Cristo at your house. I must and will see him again. I have just made M. de Villefort promise to call on him, in order to acknowledge the signal service he has rendered our family in preserving our child, if my unworthy self goes for nothing, and I flatter myself my husband's visit will be returned by the count."

Nothing was talked of throughout the evening but the adventure at Auteuil. Albert related it to his mother, Château-Renaud recounted it at the Jockey Club, and Debray detailed it at length in the salons of the minister; even Beauchamp accorded twenty lines in his journal to the relation of the count's courage and gallantry, thereby placing him as the greatest hero of the day before the eyes of all the fair members of the aristocracy of France. Vast was the crowd of visitors and friends who left their names at the hotel of Madame de Villefort, with the design of renewing their visit at the right moment, of hearing from her lips all the interesting circumstances of this most romantic adventure. As Heloise had stated, M. de Villefort donned his best black suit, drew on a pair of new white kid gloves, ordered the servants to attend the carriage dressed in their full livery, and forthwith drove to the hotel of the count, situated, as the reader is already informed, in the Avenue des Champs Elysées.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IDEOLOGY.

IF the Count of Monte-Cristo had lived for a very long time in Parisian society, he would have fully appreciated the value of the step which M. de Villefort had taken. Standing well at court, whether the king regnant was of the elder or younger branch, whether the government was doctrinaire, liberal, or conservative; esteemed clever by all just as we generally esteem those clever who have never experienced a political check; hated by many, but warmly protected by others, without being really liked by anybody, M. de Villefort held a high position in the magistracy, and maintained his eminence like a Harley or a Mole. His drawing-room, regenerated by a young wife and a daughter by his first marriage scarcely eighteen, was still one of those well-regulated Paris salons where the worship of traditional customs and the observance of rigid etiquette were carefully maintained. A freezing politeness, a strict fidelity to government principles, a profound contempt for theories and theorists, a deep-seated hatred of ideality — these were the elements of private and public life displayed by M. de Villefort.

M. de Villefort was not only a magistrate, he was also a diplomatist. His relations with the ancient court, of which he always spoke with dignity and respect, made him respected by the new one, and he knew so many things, that not only was he always carefully considered, but sometimes consulted. Perhaps this would not have been so had it been possible to get rid of M. de Villefort; but,

like the feudal barons who rebelled against their sovereign, he dwelt in an impregnable fortress. This fortress was his post as procureur du roi, all the advantages of which he worked out marvellously, and which he would not have resigned, but to be made deputy, and thus have courted neutrality into opposition.

Ordinarily M. de Villefort made and returned very few visits. His wife visited for him, and this was the received thing in the world, where they assigned to the heavy and multifarious occupations of the magistrate what was really only a calculation of pride, an off-shoot of aristocracy, in fact, the application of the axiom, "Pretend to think well of yourself, and the world will think well of you," an axiom a hundred times more useful, in our society, than that of the Greeks, "Know thyself," a knowledge for which, in our days, we have substituted the less difficult and more advantageous of *knowing others*.

For his friends, M. de Villefort was a powerful protector; for his enemies, he was a silent, but bitter enemy; for those who were neither the one nor the other, he was a statue of the law made man. Haughty air, immovable countenance, look steady and impenetrable, or else insultingly piercing and inquiring, such was the man for whom four revolutions, skilfully piled one on the other, had first constructed and then cemented the pedestal on which his fortune was elevated.

M. de Villefort had the reputation of being the least curious and least wearisome man in France. He gave a ball every year, at which he appeared for a quarter of an hour only—that is to say, five and forty minutes less than the king is visible at his balls. He was never seen at the theatres, at concerts, or in any place of public resort. Occasionally, but seldom, he played at whist, and then care was taken to select partners worthy of him—sometimes they were ambassadors, sometimes archbishops, or sometimes a prince, or a president, or some dowager

duchess. Such was the man whose carriage had just now stopped before the Count of Monte-Cristo's door.

The valet de chambre announced M. de Villefort at the moment when the count, leaning over a large table, was tracing on a map the route from St. Petersburg to China.

The procureur du roi entered with the same grave and measured step he would have employed in entering a court of justice. He was the same man, or rather the completion of the same man, whom we have heretofore seen as *substitut* at Marseilles. Nature, following up its principles, had changed nothing for him in the course he had chalked out for himself. From slender he had become meagre; from pale, yellow; his deep-set eyes were now hollow, and gold spectacles, as they shielded his eyes, seemed to make a portion of his face. All his costume was black, with the exception of his white cravat, and this funereal appearance was only broken in upon by the slight line of red ribbon which passed almost imperceptibly through his buttonhole, and which appeared like a streak of blood traced with a pencil.

Although master of himself, Monte-Cristo scrutinized with irrepressible curiosity the magistrate whose salute he returned, and who, distrustful by habit, and especially incredulous as to social marvels, was much more disposed to see in the noble stranger, as Monte-Cristo was already called, a *chevalier d'industrie*, who had come to try new ground, or some malefactor who had broken his prescribed limits, than a prince of the Holy See, or a sultan of the Arabian Nights.

"Sir," said Villefort, in the tone assumed by magistrates in their oratorical periods, and of which they cannot, or will not, divest themselves in society — "sir, the signal service which you yesterday rendered to my wife and son has made it a duty in me to offer you my thanks. Allow me, therefore, to discharge this duty, and express to you all my gratitude."

And as he said this, the "eye severe" of the magistrate

had lost nothing of its habitual arrogance. These words he articulated in the voice of a procureur-general, with the rigid inflexibility of neck and shoulders which caused his flatterers to say (as we have said before) that he was the living statue of the law.

"Monsieur," replied the count, with a chilling air, "I am very happy to have been the means of preserving a son to his mother, for they say that the sentiment of maternity is the most holy of all; and the good fortune which occurred to me, monsieur, might have enabled you to dispense with a duty which, in its discharge, confers an undoubtedly great honor; for I am aware that M. de Villefort is not lavish of the favor he bestows on me, but which, however estimable, is unequal to the satisfaction which I internally experience."

Villefort, astonished at this reply, which he by no means expected, started like a soldier who feels the blow levelled at him over the armor he wears, and a curl of his disdainful lip indicated that from that moment he noted in the tablets of his brain that the Count of Monte-Cristo was by no means a highly bred gentleman. He glanced around, in order to seize on something on which the conversation might turn, and seem to fall easily. He saw the map which Monte-Cristo had been examining when he entered, and said:

"You seem geographically engaged, sir? It is a rich study for you who, as I learn, have seen as many lands as are delineated on this map."

"Yes, sir," replied the count; "I have sought to make on the human race, taken as a mass, what you practise every day on individuals—a physiological study. I have believed it was much easier to descend from the whole to a part than to ascend from a part to the whole. It is an algebraic axiom, which makes us proceed from a known to an unknown quantity, and not from an unknown to a known; but sit down, sir, I beg of you."

Monte-Cristo pointed to a chair, which the procureur du

roi was obliged to take the trouble to move forward himself, whilst the count merely fell back into his own, on which he had been kneeling when M. de Villefort entered. Thus the count was half-way turned towards his visitor, having his back towards the window, his elbow resting on the geographical chart which afforded the conversation for the moment—a conversation which assumed, as had done those with Danglars and Morcerf, a turn analogous to the persons, if not to the situation.

“Ah, you philosophize,” replied Villefort, after a moment’s silence, during which, like a wrestler who encounters a powerful opponent, he took breath; “well, sir, really, if, like you, I had nothing to do, I should seek a more amusing occupation.”

“Why, in truth, sir,” was Monte-Cristo’s reply, “man is but an ugly caterpillar for him who studies him through a solar microscope; but you said, I think, I had nothing else to do. Now, really, let me ask, sir, have you?—do you believe you have anything to do? or, to speak in plain terms, do you really think that what you do deserves being called anything?”

Villefort’s astonishment redoubled at this second thrust so forcibly made by his strange adversary. It was a long time since the magistrate had heard a paradox so strong, or, rather, to say the truth more exactly, it was the first time he had ever heard it. The procureur du roi exerted himself to reply.

“Sir,” he responded, “you are a stranger, and I believe you say yourself that a portion of your life has been spent in Oriental countries; thus, then, you are not aware how human justice, so expeditious in barbarous countries, takes with us a prudent and well-studied course.”

“Oh, yes—yes, I do, sir; it is the *pæde claudo* of the ancients. I know all that, for it is with the justice of all countries especially that I have occupied myself—it is with the criminal procedure of all nations that I have compared natural justice, and I must say, sir, that it is the

law of primitive nations, that is, the law of retaliation, that I have most frequently found to be according to the law of God."

"If this law were adopted, sir," said the procureur du roi, "it would greatly simplify our legal codes, and in that case the magistrates would not (as you have just observed) have much to do."

"It may, perhaps, come to this in time," observed Monte-Cristo; "you know that human inventions march from the complex to the simple, and simplicity is always perfection."

"In the meanwhile," continued the magistrate, "our codes are in full force with all their contradictory enactments derived from Gallic customs, Roman laws, and Frank usages; the knowledge of all which, you will agree, is not to be acquired without lengthened labor, and it requires a tedious study to acquire this knowledge, and when that is acquired, a strong power of brain is necessary in order to retain it."

"I agree with you entirely, sir; but all that even you know with respect to the French code, I know, not only in reference to that code, but as regards the codes of all nations — the English, Turkish, Japanese, Hindoo laws are as familiar to me as the French laws, and thus I was right, when I said to you that relatively (you know that everything is relative, sir) — that relatively to what I have done, you have very little to do; but that relatively to all I have learned, you have yet a great deal to learn."

"But with what motive have you learned all this?" inquired Villefort, astonished.

Monte-Cristo smiled.

"Really, sir," he observed, "I see that in spite of the reputation which you have acquired as a superior man, you contemplate everything in the material and vulgar view of society, beginning with man, and ending with man — that is to say, in the most restricted, most narrow

view which it is possible for human understanding to embrace."

"Pray, sir, explain yourself," said Villefort, more and more astonished. "I really do — not — understand you — perfectly."

"I say, sir, that with the eyes fixed on the social organization of nations, you see only the springs of the machine, and lose sight of the sublime workman who makes them act; I say that you do not recognize before you and around you any but those placemen whose brevets have been signed by the minister or the king; and that the men whom God has put above those titulars, ministers, or the kings, by giving them a mission to follow out, instead of a post to fill — I say that they escape your narrow, limited ken. It is thus that human weakness fails from its debilitated and imperfect organs. Tobias took the angel who restored him to light for an ordinary young man. The nations took Attila, who was doomed to destroy them, for a conqueror merely similar to other conquerors, and it was necessary for both to reveal their missions, that they might be known and acknowledged; one was compelled to say, 'I am the angel of the Lord;' and the other, 'I am the hammer of God,' in order that the divine essence in both might be revealed."

"Then," said Villefort, more and more amazed, and really supposing he was speaking to a mystic or a madman, "you consider yourself as one of those extraordinary beings whom you have mentioned?"

"And why not?" said Monte-Cristo, coldly.

"Your pardon, sir," replied Villefort, quite astounded, "but you will excuse me if, when I presented myself to you, I was unaware that I should meet with a person whose knowledge and understanding so far surpass the usual knowledge and understanding of men. It is not usual with us, corrupted wretches of civilization, to find gentlemen like yourself, possessors, as you are, of immense fortune — at least, so it is said — and I beg you to observe

that I do not inquire, I merely repeat—it is not usual, I say, for such privileged and wealthy beings to waste their time in speculations on the state of society, in philosophical reveries, intended at best to console those whom fate has disinherited from the goods of this world.”

“Really, sir,” retorted the count, “have you attained the eminent situation in which you are without having admitted or even without having met with exceptions? and do you never use your eyes, which must have acquired so much finesse and certainty, to divine at a glance the kind of man who has come before you? Should not a magistrate be not merely the best administrator of the law, but the most crafty expounder of the chicanery of his profession, a steel probe to search hearts, a touchstone to try the gold which in each soul is mingled with more or less of alloy?”

“Sir,” said Villefort, “upon my word you overcome me. I really never heard a person speak as you do.”

“Because you remain entirely encircled in a round of general conditions, and have never dared to raise your wing into those upper spheres which God has peopled with invisible or marked beings.”

“And you allow, then, sir, that spheres exist, and that these marked and invisible beings mingle amongst us?”

“Why should they not? Can you see the air you breathe, and yet without which you could not for a moment exist?”

“Then we do not see those beings to whom you allude?”

“Yes, we do,—you see them whenever God pleases to allow them to assume a material form; you touch them, come in contact with them, speak to them, and they reply to you.”

“Ah!” said Villefort, smiling, “I confess I should like to be warned when one of these beings is in contact with me.”

"You have been served as you desire, monsieur, for you have been warned just now, and I now again warn you."

"Then you yourself are one of these marked beings?"

"Yes, monsieur, I believe so; for until now, no man has found himself in a position similar to mine. The dominions of kings are limited, either by mountains or rivers, or a change of manners, or an alteration of language. My kingdom is bounded only by the world, for I am neither an Italian, nor a Frenchman, nor a Hindoo, nor an American, nor a Spaniard—I am a cosmopolite. No country can say it saw my birth. God alone knows what country will see me die. I adopt all customs, speak all languages. You believe me to be a Frenchman, for I speak French with the same facility and purity as yourself. Well, Ali, my Nubian, believes me to be an Arab; Bertuccio, my steward, takes me for a Roman; Haydee, my slave, thinks me a Greek. You may, therefore, comprehend that, being of no country, asking no protection from any government, acknowledging no man as my brother, not one of the scruples that arrest the powerful, or the obstacles that paralyze the weak, paralyzes or arrests me. I have only two adversaries—I will not say two conquerors, for with perseverance I subdue even them, though they are time and distance. There is a third, and the most terrible—that is my condition as a mortal being. This alone can stop me in my onward career, and before I can have attained the goal at which I aim, for all the rest I have calculated. What men call the chances of fate, namely, ruin, change, circumstances—I have anticipated them all, and if any of these should overtake me, yet they will not overwhelm me. Unless I die, I shall always be what I am, and therefore it is that I utter these things that you have never heard, even from the mouths of kings—for kings have need, and other persons have fear of you. For who is there who does not say to himself, in society as incongruously organized as ours, 'Perhaps some day I shall have to do with the procureur du roi'?"

"But can you not say that, sir? for the moment you become an inhabitant of France you are naturally subjected to the French laws."

"I know it, sir," replied Monte-Cristo; "but when I visit a country I begin to study, by all the means which are available, the men from whom I may have anything to hope or to fear, until I know them as well, perhaps better, than they know themselves. It follows from this, that the procureur du roi, be he whom he may, with whom I should have to deal, would assuredly be more embarrassed than I should."

"That is to say," replied Villefort, with hesitation, "that human nature being weak, every man, according to your creed, has committed faults."

"Faults or crimes," responded Monte-Cristo, with a negligent air.

"And that you alone, amongst the men whom you do not recognize as your brothers—for you have said so," observed Villefort, in a tone that faltered somewhat—"you alone are perfect?"

"No, not perfect," was the count's reply; "only impenetrable, that's all. But let us leave off this strain, if the tone of it is displeasing to you: I am no more disturbed by your justice than you are by my second sight."

"No! no—by no means," said Villefort, who was afraid of seeming to abandon his ground. "No; by your brilliant and almost sublime conversation you have elevated me above the ordinary level; we no longer talk—we rise to dissertation. But you know how the theologians in their collegiate chairs, and philosophers in their controversies, occasionally say cruel truths; let us suppose for the moment that we are theologizing in a social way, or even philosophically, and I will say to you, rude as it may seem, 'My brother, you sacrifice greatly to pride; you may be above others, but above you there is a God.'"

"Above us all, sir," was Monte-Cristo's response, in a tone and with an emphasis so deep that Villefort involun-

tarily shuddered. "I have my pride for men — serpents always ready to erect themselves against every one who may pass without crushing them. But I lay aside that pride before God, who has taken me from nothing to make me what I am."

"Then, *M. le comte*, I admire you," said Villefort, who, for the first time in this strange conversation, used the aristocratical form to the unknown personage whom until now he had only called *monsieur*. "Yes, and I say to you, if you are really strong, really superior, really pious or impenetrable, which you were right in saying amounts to the same thing — yet be proud, sir, that is the characteristic of predominance — yet you have unquestionably some ambition."

"I have, sir."

"And what may it be?"

"I, too, as happens to every man once in his life, have been taken by Satan into the highest mountain in the earth, and when there he showed me all the kingdoms of the earth, and as he said before, so he said to me, 'Child of earth, what wouldst thou have to make thee adore me?' I reflected long, for a gnawing ambition had long preyed upon me, and then I replied, 'Listen — I have always heard tell of Providence, and yet I have never seen him, nor anything that resembles him, or which can make me believe that he exists. I wish to be Providence myself, for I feel that the most beautiful, noblest, most sublime thing in the world, is to recompense and punish.' Satan bowed his head and groaned. 'You mistake,' he said; 'Providence does exist, only you have never seen him, because the child of God is as invisible as the parent. You have seen nothing that resembles him, because he works by secret springs and moves by hidden ways. All I can do for you is to make you one of the agents of that Providence.' The bargain was concluded. I may sacrifice my soul, but what matters it?" added Monte-Cristo. "If the thing were to do again, I would again do it."

Villefort looked at Monte-Cristo with extreme amazement. "Monsieur le comte," he inquired, "have you any relations?"

"No, sir, I am alone in the world."

"So much the worse."

"Why?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"Because then you might witness a spectacle calculated to break down your pride. You say you fear nothing but death?"

"I did not say that I feared it; I only said that that alone could check me."

"And old age?"

"My end will be achieved before I grow old."

"And madness?"

"I have been nearly mad; and you know the axiom — *non bis in idem*. It is an axiom of criminal law, and, consequently, you understand its full application."

"Sir," continued Villefort, "there is something to fear besides death, old age, and madness. For instance, there is apoplexy — that lightning-stroke which strikes but does not destroy you, and yet after which all is ended. You are still yourself as now, and yet you are yourself no longer; you who, like Ariel, touch on the angelic, are but an inert mass, which like Caliban touches on the brutal; and this is called in human tongue, as I tell you, neither more nor less than apoplexy. Come, if you so will, M. le comte, and continue this conversation at my house any day you may be willing to see an adversary capable of understanding and anxious to refute you, and I will show you my father, M. Noirtier de Villefort, one of the most fiery Jacobins of the French Revolution; that is to say, the most remarkable audacity, seconded by a most powerful organization — a man, who, perhaps, has not, like yourself, seen all the kingdoms of the earth, but who has helped to overturn one of the most powerful; in fact, a man who, like you, believed himself one of the envoys — not of God, but of a Supreme Being; not of Providence, but of Fate.

Well, sir, the rupture of a blood-vessel on a lobe of the brain destroyed all this — not in a day, not in an hour — but in a second. M. Noirtier, who on the previous night was the old Jacobin, the old senator, the old Carbonare, laughing at the guillotine, laughing at the cannon, laughing at the dagger — M. Noirtier, playing with revolutions — M. Noirtier, for whom France was a vast chess-board, from which pawns, rooks, knights, and queens were to disappear, so that the king was checkmated — M. Noirtier, so redoubted, was the next morning *poor M. Noirtier*, the helpless old man, at the tender mercies of the weakest creature in the household, that is, his grandchild, Valentine; a dumb and frozen carcass, in fact, who only lives without suffering, that time may be given to his frame to decompose without his consciousness of his decay."

"Alas, sir!" said Monte-Cristo, "this spectacle is neither strange to my eye nor my thought. I am something of a physician, and have, like my fellows, sought more than once for the soul in living and in dead matter; yet, like Providence, it has remained invisible to my eyes, although present to my heart. A hundred writers since Socrates, Seneca, St. Augustin, and Gall have made, in verse and prose, the comparison you have made, and yet I can well understand that a father's sufferings may effect great changes in the mind of a son. I will call on you, sir, since you bid me contemplate for the advantage of my pride this terrible spectacle, which must spread so much sorrow throughout your house."

"It would have done so unquestionably, had not God given me so large a compensation. In presence of the old man, who is dragging his way to the tomb, are two children just entering into life — Valentine, the daughter by my first wife, Mademoiselle Renee de Saint-Meran, and Edward, the boy whose life you have this day saved."

"And what is your deduction from this compensation, sir?" inquired Monte-Cristo.

“My deduction is,” replied Villefort, “that my father, led away by his passions, has committed some fault unknown to human justice, but marked by the justice of God! That God, desirous in his mercy to punish but one person, has visited this justice on him alone.”

Monte-Cristo, with a smile on his lips, had yet a groan at his heart, which would have made Villefort fly had he but heard it.

“Adieu, sir,” said the magistrate, who had risen from his seat; “I leave you, bearing a remembrance of you — a remembrance of esteem, which I hope will not be disagreeable to you when you know me better; for I am not a man to bore my friends, as you will learn. Besides, you have made an eternal friend of Madame de Villefort.”

The count bowed, and contented himself with seeing Villefort to the door of his cabinet, the procureur being escorted to his carriage by two footmen, who, on a signal from their master, followed him with every mark of attention. When he had gone, Monte-Cristo drew a hard breath from his oppressed bosom, and said :

“Enough of this poison; let me now seek the antidote.” Then sounding his bell, he said to Ali, who entered, “I am going to madame’s chamber — have the carriage ready at one o’clock.”

CHAPTER XLIX.

HAYDEE.

It will be recollected that the new, or rather old, acquaintances of the Count of Monte-Cristo, residing in the Rue Meslay, were no other than Maximilian, Julie, and Emmanuel.

The very anticipations of delight to be enjoyed in his forthcoming visits—the bright, pure gleam of heavenly happiness it diffused over the almost deadly warfare in which he had voluntarily engaged, illumined his whole countenance with a look of ineffable joy and calmness, as, immediately after the departure of Villefort, his thoughts flew back to the cheering prospect before him, of tasting, at least, a brief respite from the fierce and stormy passions of his mind. Even Ali, who had hastened to obey the count's summons, went forth from his master's presence in charmed amazement at the unusual animation and pleasure depicted on features ordinarily so stern and cold; while, as though dreading to put to flight the agreeable ideas hovering over his patron's meditations, whatever they were, the faithful Nubian walked on tiptoe towards the door, holding his breath, lest its faintest sound should dissipate his master's happy reverie.

It was the hour of noon, and Monte-Cristo had set apart one hour to be passed in the apartments of Haydee; as though his so long crushed spirit could not all at once admit the feeling of pure and unmixed joy, but required a gradual succession of calm and gentle emotions to prepare his mind to receive full and perfect happiness, in the same

manner as ordinary natures demand to be inured by degrees to the reception of strong or violent sensations.

The young Greek, as we have already stated, occupied apartments wholly unconnected with those of the count. The rooms had been fitted up in strict accordance with Eastern style; that is to say, the floors were covered with the richest carpets Turkey could produce; the walls hung with brocaded silk of the most magnificent designs and texture; while around each chamber luxurious divans were placed, with piles of soft and yielding cushions, that needed only to be arranged at the pleasure or convenience of such as sought repose.

Haydee's female establishment consisted of three French attendants, and a fourth who was, like herself, a native of the climes of Greece. The first three remained constantly in a small waiting-room, ready to obey the first sound of a small golden bell, or to receive the orders of the Roman slave, who just knew sufficient French to be enabled to transmit her mistress's orders to the three other waiting-women, who had received most peremptory instructions from Monte-Cristo to treat Haydee with all the respect and deference they would observe to a queen.

The fair Greek herself generally passed her time in the apartment forming the extremity of the suite of rooms assigned to her. It was a species of boudoir, circular, and lighted only from the top, which consisted of pale pink glass. Haydee was reclining upon soft, downy cushions, covered with blue satin spotted with silver; her head, supported by one of her exquisitely moulded arms, rested on the divan immediately behind her, while the other was employed in adjusting to her lips the coral tube of a rich nargile, whose flexible pipe, placed amid the coolest and most fragrant essences, permitted not the perfumed vapor to ascend until fully impregnated with the rich odors of the most delicious flowers. Her attitude, though perfectly natural for an Eastern female, would have been deemed too full of coquettish straining after effect in an European.



Her dress, which was that of the women of Epirus, consisted of a pair of white satin trousers, embroidered with pink roses, displaying feet so exquisitely formed and so delicately fair that they might well have been taken for Parian marble, had not the eye been undeceived by their constantly shifting in and out of the fairy-like slippers in which they were encased. These tiny coverings were beautifully ornamented with gold and pearls, and turned up at the point; a blue and white striped vest, with long open sleeves, trimmed with silver loops and buttons of pearl. She also wore a species of bodice, which, closing only from the centre to the waist, exhibited the whole of the ivory throat and upper part of the bosom; three magnificent diamond clasps fastened it where requisite. The junction of the bodice and drawers was entirely concealed by one of those many-colored scarfs, whose brilliant hues and rich silken fringe have rendered them so precious in the eyes of Parisian belles. A small cap of gold, embroidered with pearls, was placed with tasteful elegance on one side of the fair Greek's head; while on the other, a natural rose, of that dark crimson almost inclining to purple, mingled its glowing colors with the luxurious masses of her hair, which for jetty lustre outrivalled the raven's wing.

The extreme beauty of the countenance, that shone forth in loveliness that mocked the vain attempts of dress to augment it, was peculiarly and purely Grecian; there were the large, dark, melting eyes, the finely formed nose, the coral lips and pearly teeth, that belonged to her race and country. And to complete the whole, Haydee was in the very springtide and fulness of youthful charms — she had not yet numbered more than eighteen summers.

Upon Monte-Cristo entering the apartments of the fair girl, he summoned her Greek attendant, and bade her inquire whether it would be agreeable to her mistress to receive his visit.

Haydee's only reply was to direct her servant, by a sign, to withdraw the tapestried curtain that hung before

the door of her boudoir, the framework of the opening thus made serving as a sort of border to the graceful tableau presented by the picturesque attitude and appearance of Haydee.

As Monte-Cristo approached, she leaned upon the elbow of the arm that held the nargile, and extending to him her other hand, said, with a smile of captivating sweetness, in the sonorous language spoken by the females of Athens and Sparta, "Why demand permission ere you enter? Are you no longer my master, or have I ceased to be your slave?"

Monte-Cristo returned the smile. "Haydee," said he, "you well know."

"Why do you address me so coldly — so distantly?" asked the fair Greek. "Have I by any means displeased you? Oh! if so, punish me as you will; but do not — do not speak to me in tones and manner so formal and constrained!"

"Listen to me, Haydee," replied the count. "I was about to remind you of a circumstance you are perfectly acquainted with, namely, that we are now in France, and that you are, consequently, free!"

"Free!" repeated the fair girl. "Of what use would freedom be to me?"

"It would enable you to quit me!"

"Quit you! Wherefore should I do so?"

"That is not for me to say; but we are now about to mix in society — to visit and be visited."

"I desire to see no one but yourself."

"Nay, but hear me, Haydee. You cannot remain in seclusion in the midst of this gay capital; and should you see one whom you could prefer, think not I would be so selfish or unjust as to ——"

"No, no!" answered Haydee, with energetic warmth, "that can never be. No man could appear charming in my eyes but yourself. None save yourself and my father have ever possessed my affection; nor will it be bestowed upon any other."

"My poor child!" replied Monte-Cristo, "that is undoubtedly because your father and myself are the only two men with whom you have conversed."

"And what care I for all others in the world! My father called me *his joy*—you style me your *love*—and both of you bestowed on me the endearing appellation of *your child*!"

"Do you remember your father, Haydee?"

The young Greek smiled. "He is here, and here," said she, touching her eyes and her heart.

"And where am I?" inquired Monte-Cristo, laughingly.

"You?" cried she, with tones of thrilling tenderness—"you are everywhere."

Monte-Cristo took the delicate hand of the young girl in his, and was about to raise it to his lips, when the simple child of nature hastily withdrew it, and presented her fair cheek instead.

"You now understand, Haydee," said the count, "that from this moment you are absolutely free; that here you exercise unlimited sway, and are at liberty to lay aside or continue the costume of your country, as it may suit your inclination. Within this mansion you are absolute mistress of your actions, and may go abroad or remain in your apartments, as may seem most agreeable to you. A carriage awaits your orders, and Ali and Myrta will accompany you whithersoever you desire to go. There is but one favor I would entreat of you."

"Oh, speak!"

"Preserve most carefully the secret of your birth. Make no allusion to the past, nor upon any occasion be induced to pronounce the names of your illustrious father or ill-fated mother."

"I have already told my lord it is not my intention to hold converse with any one save himself."

"It is possible, Haydee, that so perfect a seclusion, though conformable with the habits and customs of the East, may not be practicable in Paris. Endeavor, then,

to accustom yourself to our manner of living in these northern climes, as you did to those of Rome, Florence, Milan, and Madrid. It may be useful to you one of these days, whether you remain here or return to the East."

The fair girl raised her tearful eyes towards Monte-Cristo, as she said, with touching earnestness, "My lord would mean whether *we* return to the East or continue here, would he not?"

"My child," returned Monte-Cristo, "you know full well that whenever we part, it will be by no fault or wish of mine. The tree forsakes not the blossom that embellishes it—it is the flower that falls from the tree on which it grew."

"My lord," replied Haydee, "never will I quit you, for sure I am I could not exist if banished from your presence. Alas! what would life be worth then?"

"My poor girl, you forget that ten years will effect an essentially different change in both of us; to you that space of time will bring but the perfection of womanly graces, while it will wrinkle my brow and change my hair to gray."

"My father had numbered sixty years, and the snows of age were on his head, but I admired and loved him far better than all the gay, handsome youths I saw about his court."

"Then tell me, Haydee, do you believe you shall be able to accustom yourself to our present mode of life?"

"Shall I see you?"

"Every day."

"Then what does my lord apprehend for me?"

"I fear your growing weary."

"Nay, my lord, that cannot be. In the morning I shall rejoice in the prospect of your coming, and in the evening dwell with delight on the happiness I have enjoyed in your presence; then, too, when alone, I can call forth many pictures of the past, see vast horizons bounded only by the towering mountains of Pindus and Olympus.

Oh, believe me, that when three great passions, such as sorrow, love, and gratitude, fill the heart, *ennui* can find no place."

"You are a worthy daughter of Epirus, Haydee, and your charming and poetical ideas prove well your descent from that race of goddesses who claim your country as their birthplace. Depend on my care to see that your youth is not blighted, or suffered to pass away in ungenial solitude; and of this be well assured, that if you love me as a father, I, in my turn, feel for you all the affection of the fondest parent."

"Let not my lord be deceived; the love I bear you resembles in no degree my feelings towards my father. I survived *his* death; but were any evil to befall you, the moment in which I learned the fatal tidings would be the last of my life."

The count, with a look of indescribable tenderness, extended his hand to the animated speaker, who carried it reverentially and affectionately to her lips. Monte-Cristo, thus soothed and calmed into a befitting state of mind to pay his visit to the Morrels, departed, murmuring as he went these lines of Pindar: "Youth is a flower of which love is the fruit; happy is he who, after having watched its silent growth, is permitted to gather and call it his own."

The carriage was prepared according to orders, and stepping lightly into it, the count rode off at his usual rapid pace.

CHAPTER L.

THE MORREL FAMILY.

IN a very few minutes the count reached No. 7 in the Rue Meslay. The house was of white stone, and in a small court before it were two small beds full of beautiful flowers. In the concierge that opened the gate the count recognized Cocles; but as he had but one eye, and that eye had considerably weakened in the course of nine years, Cocles did not so readily recognize the count.

The carriages that drove up to the door were compelled to turn, to avoid a fountain that played in a basin of rock-work, in which sported a quantity of gold and silver fishes, an ornament that had excited the jealousy of the whole quarter, and had gained for the house the appellation of "*le Petit Versailles*."

The house, raised above the kitchens and cellars, had, besides the ground floor, two stories and attics. The whole of the property, consisting of an immense workshop, two pavilions at the bottom of the garden, and the garden itself, had been purchased by Emmanuel, who had seen at a glance that he could make a profitable speculation of it. He had reserved the house and half the garden, and building a wall between the garden and workshops, had let them upon lease with the pavilions at the bottom of the garden. So that for a trifling sum he was as well lodged, and as perfectly shut out from observation as the inhabitant of the finest hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain.

The breakfast-room was of oak; the salon of mahogany and blue velvet; the bedroom of citron-wood and green damask; there was a study for Emmanuel, who never

studied, and a music-room for Julie, who never played. The whole of the second story was set apart for Maximilian; it was precisely the same as his sister's apartments, except that the breakfast-parlor was changed into a billiard-room, where he received his friends. He was superintending the dressing of his horse and smoking his cigar at the entrance to the garden when the count's carriage stopped at the door.

Cocles opened the gate, and Baptistin, springing from the box, inquired whether Monsieur and Madame Herbault and Monsieur Maximilian Morrel would see M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo.

"M. le Comte de Monte-Cristo?" cried Morrel, throwing away his cigar and hastening to the carriage: "I should think we would see him. Ah! a thousand thanks, M. le comte, for not having forgotten your promise."

And the young officer shook the count's hand so warmly that the latter could not be mistaken as to the sincerity of his joy, and he saw that he had been expected with impatience, and was received with pleasure.

"Come, come!" said Maximilian; "I will serve as your guide; such a man as you are ought not to be introduced by a servant. My sister is in the garden, plucking the dead roses; my brother reading his two papers, *La Presse* and *Les Débats*, within five steps of her, for wherever you see Madame Herbault, you have only to look within a circle of four yards and you will find M. Emmanuel, and 'reciprocally,' as they say at the Ecole Polytechnique."

At the sound of their steps, a young woman of twenty to five and twenty, dressed in a silk robe-de-chambre, and busily engaged plucking the dead leaves off a splendid rose-tree, raised her head.

This female was Julie, who had become, as the clerk of the house of Thomson and French had predicted, Madame Emmanuel Herbault.

She uttered a cry of surprise at the sight of a stranger, and Maximilian began to laugh.

"Don't disturb yourself, Julie," said he. "M. le comte has only been two or three days in Paris, but he already knows what a woman of fashion of the Marais is, and if he does not, you will show him."

"Ah, monsieur!" returned Julie, "it is treason in my brother to bring you thus, but he never has any regard for his poor sister. Penelon! Penelon!"

An old man, who was digging busily at one of the beds of roses, stuck his spade on the earth, and approached cap in hand, and trying to conceal a quid of tobacco he had just thrust into his cheek. A few locks of gray mingled with his hair, which was still thick and matted, whilst his bronzed features and determined glance announced the old sailor who had braved the heat of the equator and the storms of the tropics.

"I think you hailed me, Mademoiselle Julie?" said he.

Penelon had still preserved the habit of calling his master's daughter "Mademoiselle Julie," and had never been able to change the name to Madame Herbault.

"Penelon," replied Julie, "go and inform M. Emmanuel of this gentleman's visit, and Maximilian will conduct him to the salon."

Then turning to Monte-Cristo:

"I hope you will permit me to leave you for a few minutes," continued she; and without awaiting any reply, disappeared behind a clump of trees, and entered the house by a lateral alley.

"I am sorry to see," observed Monte-Cristo to Morrel, "that I cause no small disturbance in your house."

"Look there," answered Maximilian, laughing; "there is her husband changing his jacket for a coat. I assure you, you are well known in the Rue Meslay."

"Your family appears to me a very happy one?" said the count, as if speaking to himself.

"Oh, yes, I assure you, M. le comte, they want nothing that can render them happy; they are young and cheerful, they are tenderly attached to each other, and with twenty-

five thousand francs a year, they fancy themselves as rich as Rothschild."

"Five and twenty thousand francs is not a large sum, however," replied Monte-Cristo, with a tone so sweet and gentle, that it went to Maximilian's heart like the voice of a father; "but they will not be content with that; your brother-in-law is a barrister? a doctor?"

"He was a merchant, M. le comte, and had succeeded to the business of my poor father. M. Morrel, at his death, left 500,000 francs, which were divided between my sister and myself, for we were his only children. Her husband, who when he married her had no other patrimony than his probity, his first-rate ability, and his spotless reputation, wished to possess as much as his wife. He labored and toiled until he had amassed 250,000 francs; six years sufficed to achieve this object. Oh, I assure you, M. le comte, it was a touching spectacle to see these young creatures, destined by their talents for higher stations, toiling together, and who, unwilling to change any of the customs of their paternal house, took six years to accomplish that which innovators would have effected in two or three. Marseilles resounded with their well-earned praises. At last, one day Emmanuel came to his wife, who had just finished making up the accounts:

"‘Julie,’ said he to her, ‘Cocles has just given me the last rouleau of a hundred francs; that completes the 250,000 francs we had fixed as the limits of our gains. Can you content yourself with the small fortune which we shall possess for the future? Listen to me. Our house transacts business to the amount of a million a year, from which we derive an income of 40,000 francs. We can dispose of the business, if we please, in an hour, for I have received a letter from M. Delaunay, in which he offers to purchase the good-will of the house, to unite with his own, for 300,000 francs. Advise me what I had better do.’

"‘Emmanuel,’ returned my sister, ‘the house of Morrel can only be carried on by a Morrel. Is it not worth 300,-

000 francs to save our father's name from the chances of evil fortune and failure?'

"'I thought so,' replied Emmanuel; 'but I wished to have your advice.'

"'This is my counsel. Our accounts are made up and our bills paid; all we have to do is to stop the issue of any more, and close our office.'

"This was done instantly. It was three o'clock; at a quarter past, a merchant presented himself to insure two ships; it was a clear profit of 15,000 francs.

"'Monsieur,' said Emmanuel, 'have the goodness to address yourself to M. Delaunay. We have quitted business.'

"'How long?' inquired the astonished merchant.

"'A quarter of an hour,' was the reply.

"And this is the reason, monsieur," continued Maximilian, "of my sister and brother-in-law having only 25,000 francs a year."

Maximilian had scarcely finished his story, during which the count's heart had seemed ready to burst, when Emmanuel entered, clad in a hat and coat. He saluted the count with the air of a man who is aware of the rank of his guest; then, after having led Monte-Cristo around the little garden, he returned to the house.

A large vase of Japan porcelain, filled with flowers that impregnated the air with their perfume, stood in the salon. Julie, suitably dressed, and her hair arranged (she had accomplished this feat in less than ten minutes), received the count on his entrance.

The songs of the birds were heard in an aviary hard by — the branches of false ebony-trees and rose acacias forming the border of the blue velvet curtains. Everything in this charming retreat, from the warble of the birds to the smile of the mistress, breathed tranquillity and repose.

The count had felt, from the moment he entered the house, the influence of this happiness, and he remained silent and pensive, forgetting that he was expected to

recommence the conversation, which had ceased after the first salutations had been exchanged. He perceived the pause, and, by a violent effort tearing himself from his pleasing reverie :

"Madame," said he, at length, "I pray you to excuse my emotion, which must astonish you who are only accustomed to the happiness I meet here; but satisfaction is so new a sight to me, that I could never be weary of looking at yourself and your husband."

"We are very happy, monsieur," replied Julie; "but we have also known unhappiness, and few have ever undergone more bitter sufferings than ourselves."

The count's features displayed an expression of the most intense curiosity.

"Oh, all this is a family history, as Château-Renaud told you the other day," observed Maximilian. "This humble picture would have but little interest for you, accustomed as you are to behold the pleasures and the misfortunes of the wealthy and illustrious; but such as we are, we have experienced bitter sorrows."

"And God has poured balm into your wounds, as he does to all those who are in affliction?" said Monte-Cristo, inquiringly.

"Yes, M. le comte," returned Julie, "we may indeed say he has; for he has done for us what he grants only to his chosen; he sent us one of his angels."

The count's cheeks became scarlet, and he coughed, in order to have an excuse for putting his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Those born to wealth, and who have the means of gratifying every wish," said Emmanuel, "know not what is the real happiness of life; just as those who have been tossed on the stormy waters of the ocean on a few frail planks can alone estimate the value of a clear and serene sky."

Monte-Cristo rose, and without making any answer (for the tremulousness of his voice would have betrayed his

emotion), walked up and down the apartment with a slow step.

"Our magnificence makes you smile, M. le comte?" said Maximilian, who had followed him with his eyes.

"No, no," returned Monte-Cristo, pale as death, pressing one hand on his heart, to still its throbbings, whilst with the other he pointed to a crystal cover, beneath which a silken purse lay on a black velvet cushion, "I was wondering what could be the use of this purse, which contains a paper at one end and at the other a large diamond."

"M. le comte," replied Maximilian, with an air of gravity, "those are our most precious family treasures."

"The stone seems very brilliant," answered the count.

"Oh, my brother does not allude to its value, although it has been estimated at 100,000 francs; he means, that the articles contained in this purse are the relics of the angel I spoke of just now."

"This I do not comprehend; and yet I may not ask for an explanation, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, bowing. "Pardon me, I had no intention of committing an indiscretion."

"Indiscretion! — oh, you make us happy by giving us an occasion of expatiating on this subject. Did we intend to conceal the noble action this purse commemorates, we should not expose it thus. Oh! would we could relate it everywhere and to every one, so that the emotion of our unknown benefactor might reveal his presence."

"Ah! really," said Monte-Cristo, in a half-stifled voice.

"Monsieur," returned Maximilian, raising the glass cover and respectfully kissing the silken purse, "this has touched the hand of a man who saved my father from suicide, us from ruin, and our name from shame and disgrace — a man by whose matchless benevolence we, poor children, doomed to want and wretchedness, can at present hear every one envying our happy lot. This letter" — (as he spoke, Maximilian drew a letter from the purse and gave it to the count) — "this letter was written by him

the day that my father had taken a desperate resolution; and this diamond was given by the generous unknown to my sister as her dowry."

Monte-Cristo opened the letter, and read it with an indescribable feeling of delight. It was the letter written (as our readers know) to Julie, and signed "Sinbad the Sailor."

"Unknown, you say, is the man who rendered you this service — unknown to you?"

"Yes; we have never had the happiness of pressing his hand," continued Maximilian. "We have supplicated Heaven in vain to grant us this favor, but all the affair has had a mysterious direction we cannot comprehend; all has been guided by a hand invisible, but powerful as that of an enchanter."

"Oh," cried Julie, "I have not lost all hope of some day kissing that hand, as I now kiss the purse which he has touched. Four years ago, Penelon was at Trieste — Penelon, M. le comte, is the old sailor you saw in the garden, and who from quartermaster has become gardener — Penelon, when he was at Trieste, saw on the quay an Englishman, who was on the point of embarking on board a yacht; and he recognized him as the person who called on my father the 5th of June, 1829, and who wrote me this letter the 5th of September. He felt quite convinced of his identity, but he would not venture to address him."

"An Englishman?" said Monte-Cristo, who grew uneasy at the attention with which Julie looked at him. "An Englishman, you say?"

"Yes," replied Maximilian, "an Englishman, who represented himself as the confidential clerk of the house of Thomson and French, at Rome. It was this that made me start when you said the other day at M. de Morcerf's that Messrs. Thomson and French were your bankers. That happened, as I told you, in 1829. For God's sake, tell me, did you know this Englishman?"

"But you tell me, also, that the house of Thomson and

French have constantly denied having rendered you this service?"

"Yes."

"Then is it not probable that this Englishman may be some one who, grateful for a kindness your father had shown him, and which he himself had forgotten, has taken this method of requiting the obligation?"

"Everything is possible on such an occasion, even a miracle."

"What was his name?" asked Monte-Cristo.

"He gave no other name," answered Julie, looking earnestly at the count, "than that at the end of his letter — 'Sinbad the Sailor.'"

"Which is evidently not his real name, but a fictitious one."

Then noticing that Julie was struck with the sound of his voice:

"Tell me," continued he, "was he not about my height, perhaps a little taller, his chin imprisoned, to use the word, in a high cravat, his coat closely buttoned up, and constantly taking out his pencil?"

"Oh, do you then know him?" cried Julie, whose eyes sparkled with joy.

"No," returned Monte-Cristo, "I only guessed. I knew a Lord Wilmore, who was constantly doing actions of this kind."

"Without revealing himself?"

"He was an eccentric being, and did not believe in the existence of gratitude."

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Julie, clasping her hands. "In what did he believe, then?"

"He did not credit it at the period when I knew him," said Monte-Cristo, touched to the heart by the accent of Julie's voice; "but perhaps since then he has had proofs that gratitude does exist."

"And do you know this gentleman, monsieur?" inquired Emmanuel.

"Oh, if you do know him," cried Julie, "can you tell us where he is — where we can find him? Maximilian — Emmanuel — if we do but discover him, he must believe in the gratitude of the heart!"

Monte-Cristo felt tears start into his eyes, and he again walked hastily up and down the room.

"In the name of Heaven!" said Maximilian, "if you know anything of him, tell us what it is."

"Alas!" replied Monte-Cristo, striving to repress his emotion, "if Lord Wilmore was your unknown benefactor, I fear you will never again see him. I parted from him, two years ago, at Palermo, and he was then on the point of setting out for the most remote regions, so that I fear he will never return."

"Oh, monsieur, this is cruel of you," said Julie, much affected; and the young lady's eyes swam with tears.

"Madame," replied Monte-Cristo, gravely, and gazing earnestly on the two liquid pearls that trickled down Julie's cheeks, "had Lord Wilmore seen what I now see, he would become attached to life, for the tears you shed would reconcile him to mankind;" and he held out his hand to Julie, who gave him hers, carried away by the look and accent of the count.

"But," continued she, "Lord Wilmore had a family or friends; he must have known some one; can we not ——"

"Oh, it is useless to inquire," returned the count. "He was not the man you seek for; he was my friend. He had no secrets from me, and he would have confided this also to me."

"And he told you nothing?"

"Not a word."

"And yet you instantly named him."

"And in such a case one supposes ——"

"Sister, sister," said Maximilian, coming to the count's aid, "monsieur is quite right. Recollect what our excellent father so often told us, 'It was no Englishman that thus saved us.'"

Monte-Cristo started.

"What did your father tell you, M. Morrel?" said he, eagerly.

"My father thought this action had been miraculously performed, — he believed that a benefactor had arisen from the grave to save us. Oh, it was a touching superstition, monsieur, and although I did not myself believe it, I would not for the world have destroyed my father's faith in it. How often did he muse over it and pronounce the name of a dear friend — a friend lost to him forever; and on his death-bed, when the near approach of eternity seemed to have illumined his mind with supernatural light, this thought, which had until then been but a doubt, became a conviction, and his last words were, 'Maximilian, it was Edmond Dantes!'"

At these words the count's paleness, which had for some time been increasing, became alarming; he could not speak; he looked at his watch, like a man who has forgotten the time, said a few hurried words to Madame Herbault, and pressing the hands of Emmanuel and Maximilian:

"Madame," said he, "I trust you will allow me to visit you from time to time; I value your friendship, and feel grateful to you for your welcome, for this is the first time for many years that I have thus yielded to my feelings;" and he hastily quitted the apartment.

"This Count de Monte-Cristo is a singular man," said Emmanuel.

"Yes," answered Maximilian; "but I feel sure he has an excellent heart, and that he likes us."

"His voice went to my heart," observed Julie; "and two or three times I fancied I had heard it before."

CHAPTER LI.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

ABOUT the centre of the Faubourg Saint Honore, and at the back of one of the most distinguished-looking mansions in this rich neighborhood, where the various hotels vie with each other for elegance of design and magnificence of construction, extended a large garden, whose widely spreading chestnut-trees raised their heads above the walls high and solid as those of a rampart, scattering, each spring, a shower of delicate pink and white blossoms into the large stone vases placed at equal distances upon the two square pilasters, supporting an iron gate, curiously wrought, after the style and manner of the reign of Louis XIV. This noble entrance, however, spite of its striking appearance and the graceful effect of the geraniums planted in the two vases, as they waved their variegated leaves in the wind, and charmed the eye with their scarlet bloom, had fallen into utter disuse from the period when the proprietors of the hotel (and many years had elapsed since then) had confined themselves to the possession of the hotel, with its thickly planted courtyard, opening into the Faubourg Saint Honore, and the garden shut in by this gate, which formerly communicated with a fine kitchen-garden of about an acre in extent. But the demon of speculation having drawn a line, or in other words projected a street, at the extremity of this kitchen-garden, and even before the foundations of the said street were dug, its name being duly affixed upon an iron plate at the corner of the situation chosen, it occurred to the then possessor of the hotel we are now describing that a hand-

some sum might be obtained for the ground now devoted to fruits and vegetables, for the purpose of adding it to the projected street intended to form a great branch of communication with the Faubourg Saint Honore itself, one of the most important thoroughfares in the city of Paris.

In matters of speculation, however, though "*man* proposes," yet *money* "disposes." From some such difficulty the newly named street died almost in birth, and the purchaser of the "kitchen-garden," having paid a high price for it, and being quite unable to find any one willing to take his bargain off his hands without a considerable loss, yet still clinging to the belief that at some future day he should obtain a sum for it that would repay him not only for his past outlay, but also the interest upon the capital locked up in his new acquisition, contented himself with letting the ground temporarily to some market-gardeners, at a yearly rental of 500 francs.

Thus, then, as already stated, the iron gate leading into the kitchen-garden had been closed up and left to the rust, which bade fair to destroy its hinges ere long, while to prevent the ignoble glances of the diggers and delvers of the ground from presuming to sully the aristocratic enclosure belonging to the hotel, the gate in question had been boarded up to a height of six feet. True, the planks were not so closely adjusted but that a hasty peep might be obtained between their interstices; but the strict decorum and rigid propriety of the inhabitants of the hotel left no grounds for apprehending that advantage would be taken of that circumstance.

Horticulture seemed, however, to have been abandoned in the deserted kitchen-garden, and where the most choice and delicate of fruits and vegetables once reared their heads, a scanty crop of lucerne alone bore evidence of its being deemed worthy of cultivation. A small, low door gave egress from the walled space we have been describing into the projected street, the ground having been abandoned

as unproductive by its various renters, and had now fallen so completely in general estimation as to return not even the fraction of the poor ten per cent. it had originally paid.

Towards the hotel the chestnut-trees we have before mentioned rose high above the wall, without in any way affecting the growth of other luxuriant shrubs and flowers that eagerly pressed forward to fill up the vacant spaces, as though asserting their right to enjoy the boon of light and air also. At one corner, where the foliage became so thick as almost to shut out day, a large stone bench and sundry rustic seats indicated that this sheltered spot was either in general favor or particular use by some inhabitant of the hotel, which was faintly discernible through the dense mass of verdure that partially concealed it, though situated but a hundred paces off. Whoever had selected this retired portion of the grounds as the boundary of their walks or scene of their meditative musings, was abundantly justified in their choice by the absence of all glare, the cool, refreshing shade, the screen it afforded from the scorching rays of the sun, that found no entrance there even during the burning days of hottest summer, the incessant and melodious warbling of birds, and the entire removal from either the noise of the street or the bustle of the hotel.

On the evening of one of the warmest days spring had yet bestowed on the inhabitants of Paris, might be seen, negligently thrown upon the stone bench, a book, a parasol, and a work-basket, from which hung a partly embroidered cambric handkerchief, while at a little distance from these articles was a young female, standing close to the iron gate, endeavoring to discern something on the other side, by means of the openings in the planks, whilst the earnestness of her attitude and the fixed gaze with which she seemed to seek the object of her wishes, proved how much her feelings were interested in the matter.

At that instant the little side-door leading from the

waste ground to the street was noiselessly opened, and a tall, powerful young man, dressed in a common gray blouse and velvet cap, but whose carefully arranged hair, beard, and moustache, all of the richest and glossiest black, but ill accorded with his plebeian attire — after casting a rapid glance around him, in order to assure himself he was unobserved — entered by this door, and, carefully closing and securing it after him, proceeded with a hurried step towards the iron gate.

At the sight of him she expected, though probably not under such a costume, the female we have before mentioned started in terror, and was about to make a hasty retreat. But the eye of love had already seen, even through the narrow chinks of the wooden palisades, the movement of the white robe, and observed the fluttering of the blue sash fastened around the slender waist of his fair neighbor. Pressing his lips close to the envious planks that prevented his further progress, he exclaimed, "Fear nothing, Valentine — it is I!"

Again the timid girl found courage to return to the gate, saying, as she did so, "And wherefore come you so late to-day? It is almost the dinner hour, and I have been compelled to exercise my utmost skill to get rid of the incessant watchfulness of my stepmother, as well as the espionage of my maid, who, no doubt, is employed to report all I do and say. Nor has it cost me a little trouble to free myself from the troublesome society of my brother, under pretence of coming hither to work undisturbed at my embroidery, which, by the way, I am in no hurry to finish. So pray excuse yourself as well as you can for having made me wait, and, after that, tell me why I see you in so singular a dress, that at first I did not recognize you."

"Dearest Valentine!" said the young man, "the difference between our respective stations makes me fear to offend you by speaking of my love, but yet I cannot find myself in your presence without longing to pour forth my

soul and to tell you how fondly I adore you. If it be but to carry away with me the recollection of such sweet moments, I could even bless — thank you for chiding me, for it leaves me a gleam of hope, that if not expecting me (and that indeed would be worse than vanity of me to suppose), at least I was in your thoughts. You asked me the cause of my being late, as also why I come thus disguised. I will candidly explain the reason of both, and I trust to your goodness to pardon me. But first, let me tell you I have chosen a trade.”

“A trade! Oh, Maximilian, how can you jest at a time when we have such deep cause for uneasiness?”

“Heaven keep me from jesting with that which is far dearer to me than life itself! But listen to me, Valentine, and I will tell you all about it. Tired out with ranging fields and scaling walls, and seriously alarmed at the idea suggested by yourself, that if caught hovering about here your father would very likely have me sent to prison as a thief, a sort of thing not very desirable for an officer in the French army, whose continual presence in a place where no warlike projects could be supposed to account for it might well create surprise; so from a captain of Spahis I have become a gardener, and consequently adopted the costume of my calling.”

“What excessive nonsense you talk, Maximilian!”

“Nonsense! Pray do not call what I consider the wisest action of my life by such a name. Consider, by becoming a gardener, I effectually screen our meetings from all suspicion or danger.”

“I beseech of you, Maximilian, to cease trifling, and tell me what you really mean.”

“Simply, that having ascertained that the piece of ground on which I stand was to let, I made application for it, was readily accepted by the proprietor, and am now master of this fine crop of lucerne! Think of that, Valentine! There is nothing now to prevent my building myself a little hut on my plantation, and residing not twenty

yards from you. Only imagine what happiness that would afford me! I can scarcely contain myself at the bare idea. Such felicity seems above all price—as a thing impossible and unattainable. But would you believe that I purchase all this delight, joy, and happiness, for which I would cheerfully have surrendered ten years of my life, at the small cost of 500 francs per annum, paid quarterly! Henceforth we have nothing to fear. I am on my own ground, and have an undoubted right to place a ladder against the wall, and to look over when I please, without having any apprehensions of being taken off by the police as a suspicious character. I may also enjoy the precious privilege of assuring you of my fond, faithful, and unalterable affection, whenever you visit your favorite bower; unless, indeed, it offends your pride to listen to professions of love from the lips of a poor workingman, clad in a blouse and cap.”

A faint cry of mingled pleasure and surprise escaped from the lips of Valentine, who almost instantly said in a saddened tone, as though some envious cloud darkened the joy which illumined her heart:

“Alas! No, Maximilian, this must not be, for many reasons! We should presume too much on your own strength, and, like others, perhaps, be led astray by our blind confidence in each other’s prudence.”

“How can you for an instant entertain so unworthy a thought, dear Valentine? Have I not, from the first blessed hour of our acquaintance, schooled all my words and actions to your sentiments and ideas? And you have, I am sure, the fullest confidence in my honor. When you spoke to me of your experiencing a vague and indefinite sense of coming danger, I placed myself blindly and devotedly at your service, asking no other reward than the pleasure of being useful to you; and have I ever since, by word or look, given you cause of regret for having selected me from the numbers that would willingly have sacrificed their lives for you? You told me, my dear Valentine,

that you were engaged to M. d'Epinay, and that your father was resolved upon completing the match, and that from his will there was no appeal, as M. de Villefort was never known to change a determination once formed. I kept in the background, as you wished; waiting not the decision of your heart or my own, but hoping Providence would graciously interpose in our behalf, and order events in our favor. But what cared I for delays or difficulties so long as my sweet Valentine confessed she loved me, and accepted my fervent vows of unfailing constancy? Blessed avowal! the very recollection of which can at all times raise me even from despair itself. To hear you repeat those enrapturing words from time to time is all I ask, and to obtain that privilege I would cheerfully endure even double my present inquietudes."

"Ah, Maximilian! that is the very thing that makes you so bold, and which renders me at once so happy and unhappy, that I frequently ask myself whether it is better for me to endure the harshness of my mother-in-law, and her blind preference for her own child, or to be, as I now am, insensible to any pleasure save such as I find in these our meetings, so fraught with danger to both."

"I will not admit that word," returned the young man; "it is at once cruel and unjust; is it possible to find a more submissive slave than myself? You have permitted me to converse with you from time to time, Valentine, but forbidden my ever following you in your walks or elsewhere — have I not obeyed? And since I found means to enter this enclosure to exchange a few words with you through this door — to be close to you without being able to obtain a view of your dear features — I have even solicited to touch the tip of your glove through the small openings of the palisades — think you that at my age, and with my strength, this wall that now parts us would keep me from your side one instant were it not that my respect for your wishes presents an impassable barrier? Never has a complaint or a murmur of your rigor escaped

me. I have been bound by my promises as rigidly as any knight of olden times. Come, come, dearest Valentine, confess that what I say is true, lest I be tempted to call you unjust."

"It is, indeed, most true!" said Valentine, as she passed the end of her slender fingers through a small opening in the planks, thus permitting her lover to press his lips to the taper finger that almost instantly disappeared; "and you are a true and faithful friend, but still you acted from motives of self-interest, my dear Maximilian, for you well knew that from the moment in which you had manifested an opposite spirit all would have ended between us. You promised to bestow on me the friendly affection of a brother. I who have no friend but yourself upon earth, who am neglected and forgotten by my father, harassed and persecuted by my step-mother, and left to the sole companionship of a paralyzed and speechless old man, whose withered hand can no longer press mine, and whose eyes alone converse with me, while, doubtless, however fixed or chilled his frame, there still lingers in his heart the warmest tenderness for his poor grandchild. Oh, how bitter a fate is mine, to serve either as a victim or an enemy to all who are stronger than myself, while my old friend and supporter is but a living corpse! Indeed, indeed, Maximilian, I am very miserable, and you are right to love me for myself alone."

"Dear Valentine!" replied the young man, deeply affected; "I will not say you are all I love in the world, for I dearly prize my sister and brother-in-law, but my affection for them is calm and tranquil, in no manner resembling that I feel for you. At the mere thought of you my heart beats more quickly, my blood flows with increased rapidity through my veins, and my breast heaves with tumultuous emotions; but I solemnly promise you to restrain all this ardor, this fervor and intensity of feeling, until you yourself shall require me to render them available in serving or assisting you. M. Franz is not expected

to return home for a year to come, I am told; in that time many favorable and unforeseen chances may befriend us. Let us then hope for the best — hope is so sweet a comforter! Meanwhile, Valentine, while reproaching me with selfishness, think a little what you have been to me — the beautiful but cold resemblance of a marble Venus. What promise of future reward have you made me for all the submission and obedience I have evinced? none whatever! What granted me? scarcely more! You tell me of M. Franz d'Epinay, your betrothed lover, and you shrink from the idea of being his wife; but tell me, Valentine, is there no other sorrow in your heart? You see me devoted to you body and soul, my life and each warm drop that circles around my heart are consecrated to your service; you know full well that my existence is bound up in yours, that were I to lose you I would not outlive the hour of such crushing misery; yet you speak with calmness of the prospect of your being the wife of another. Oh, Valentine! were I in your place and did I feel conscious, as you do, of being worshipped, adored, with such a love as mine, a hundred times at least should I have passed my hand between these iron bars, and said to poor Maximilian, 'Take this hand, dearest Maximilian, and believe that, living or dead, I am yours — yours only, and forever.'

The poor girl made no reply, but her lover could plainly hear her sobs and tears.

A rapid change took place in the young man's feelings.

"Dearest, dearest Valentine!" exclaimed he; "forgive me if I have offended you, and forget the words I spoke if they have unwittingly caused you pain."

"No, Maximilian, I am not offended," answered she; "but do you not see what a poor helpless being I am, almost a stranger and an outcast in my father's house, where even he is seldom seen; whose will has been thwarted and spirits broken from the age of ten years, beneath the iron rod so sternly exercised over me? Oppressed, mortified, and persecuted, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute,

no person has cared for, even observed, my sufferings, nor have I ever breathed one word on the subject save to yourself. Outwardly, and in the eyes of the world, I am surrounded by kindness and affection, but the reverse is the case. The general remark is, 'Oh, it cannot be expected that one of so stern a character as M. Villefort could lavish the tenderness some fathers do on their daughters! What though she has lost her own mother at a tender age, she has had the happiness to find a second mother in Madame de Villefort.' The world, however, is mistaken; my father abandons me from utter indifference, while my step-mother detests me with a hatred so much the more terrible as it is veiled beneath a continual smile."

"Hate you, sweet Valentine!" exclaimed the young man; "how is it possible for any one to do that?"

"Alas!" replied the weeping girl; "I am obliged to own that my step-mother's aversion to me arises from a very natural source — her overweening love for her child, my brother Edward."

"But why should it?"

"Nay! I know not; but though unwilling to introduce money matters into our present conversation, I will just say this much, that her extreme dislike to me has its origin in mercenary motives; and I much fear she envies me the fortune I already enjoy in the right of my mother, and which will be more than doubled at the death of M. and Madame Meran, whose sole heiress I am. Madame de Villefort has nothing of her own, and hates me for being so richly endowed. Alas! how gladly would I exchange the half of this wealth for the happiness of at least sharing my father's love! God knows, I would prefer sacrificing the whole, so that it would obtain for me a happy and affectionate home."

"Poor Valentine!"

"I seem to myself as though living a life of bondage, yet at the same time am so conscious of my own weakness, that I fear to break the restraint in which I am held, lest

I fall utterly powerless and helpless. Then, too, my father is not a person whose orders may be infringed with impunity; protected as he is by his high position, and firmly established reputation for talent and unswerving integrity, no one could oppose him; he is all-powerful with even his king; you he would crush at a word, and myself he would cause to expire of terror at his feet. Dear Maximilian, believe me when I assure you that I attempt not to resist my father's commands, more on your account than my own; for, though I could willingly sacrifice myself, I would not peril your safety."

"But wherefore, my sweet Valentine, do you persist in anticipating the worst and in viewing everything through so gloomy a medium — why picture the future so fraught with evil?"

"Because I judge it from the past."

"Still, consider that, although I may not be, strictly speaking, what is termed an illustrious match for you, I am for many reasons not altogether so much beneath your alliance. The days when such distinctions were so nicely weighed and considered no longer exist in France, and the first families of the monarchy have intermarried with those of the empire. The aristocracy of the lance has allied itself with the nobility of the cannon. Now I belong to this last-named class; and certainly my prospects of military preferment are most encouraging as well as certain. My fortune, though small, is free and unfettered, and the memory of my late father respected in our country, Valentine, as that of the most upright and honorable of the city; I say our country, because you were born not far from Marseilles."

"Name not Marseilles, I beseech you, Maximilian; that one word brings back my mother to my recollection — my angel mother, who died too soon for myself and all who knew her; but who after watching over her child during the brief period allotted to her in this world, now I fondly hope, and fully believe, contemplates her with pitying ten-

derness from those realms of bliss to which her pure spirit has flown. Ah, were she still living, we need fear nothing, Maximilian, for I would confide our love to her, and she would aid and protect us."

"I fear, Valentine," replied the lover, "that were she living, I should never have had the happiness of knowing you; you would then have been too happy to have stooped from your grandeur to bestow a thought on a humble, obscure individual like myself."

"It is you who are unkind, ay, and unjust too, now, Maximilian," cried Valentine; "but there is one thing I wish to know."

"And what is that?" inquired the young man, perceiving that Valentine hesitated and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

"Tell me truly, Maximilian, whether in former days, when our fathers dwelt at Marseilles, there ever existed any misunderstanding between them?"

"Not that I am at all aware of," replied the young man, "unless, indeed, any ill-feeling might have arisen from their being of opposite parties; your father being, as you know, a zealous partisan of the Bourbons, while mine was wholly devoted to the emperor—there could not possibly be any other difference between them; but now that I have answered your question to the best of my power and knowledge, tell me, dearest, why you ask?"

"I will," replied his fair companion, "for it is but right you should know all. Then, I must begin by referring to the day when your being made an officer of the Legion of Honor was publicly announced in the papers. We were all sitting in the apartments of my grandfather, M. Noir-tier; M. Danglars was there also—you recollect M. Danglars, do you not, Maximilian, the banker, whose horses ran away with my step-mother and little brother, and very nearly killed them? While the rest of the company were discussing the approaching marriage of Made-moiselle Danglars, I was occupied in reading the paper

aloud to my grandfather; but when I came to the paragraph concerning you, although I had done nothing else but read it over to myself all the morning (you know you had told me all the previous evening), I felt so happy, and yet so nervous, at the idea of pronouncing your beloved name aloud, and before so many people, that I really think I should have passed it over, but for the fear that my so doing might create suspicions as to the cause of my silence, so I summoned up all my courage, and read it as firmly and steadily as I could."

"Dear Valentine!"

"Well, would you believe it, directly my father caught the sound of your name, he turned around quite hastily, and, like a poor silly thing, I was so persuaded that every one must be as much affected as myself by the utterance of your name, that I was not surprised to see my father start and almost tremble; but I even thought (though that surely must have been a mistake) that M. Danglars underwent a similar emotion."

"‘Morrel! Morrel!’ cried my father, ‘stop a bit;’ then knitting his brows into a deep frown, he added, ‘Surely this cannot be one of the Morrel family who lived at Marseilles, and gave us so much trouble from their being such violent Bonapartists — I mean about the year 1815.’

"‘I fancy,’ replied M. Danglars, ‘that the individual alluded to in the journal mademoiselle is reading is the son of the large shipowner there.’"

"‘Indeed!’ answered Maximilian; ‘and what said your father then, Valentine?’"

"‘Oh, such a dreadful thing, I dare not repeat it.’"

"‘Nay, dearest!’ said the young man, ‘be not afraid to tell me — say, what was it?’"

"‘Ah,’ continued my father, still frowning severely, ‘their idolized emperor treated these madmen as they deserved: he called them *“food for cannon,”* which was precisely all they were good for; and I am delighted to see that the present government have adopted this salu-

tary principle with all its pristine vigor; if Algiers were good for nothing but to furnish out the means of carrying so admirable an idea into practice, it would be an acquisition well worthy of struggling to obtain. Though it certainly does cost France somewhat dear to assert its rights in that uncivilized country.’”

“The sentiments expressed were somewhat unfeeling, I must confess,” said Maximilian, “but do not let that tinge your fair cheek with the blush of shame, my gentle Valentine; for I can assure you that, although in a different way, my father was not a jot or tittle behind yours in the heat of his political expressions: ‘Why,’ said he, ‘does not the emperor, who has devised so many clever and efficient modes of improving the art of war, not form a regiment of lawyers, judges, and legal practitioners, sending them in the hottest fire the enemy could maintain, and using them to save better men?’ You see, my sweet Valentine, that for mildness of expression and imaginative benefits, there is not much to choose between the language of either royalist or Bonapartist. But what said M. Danglars to this burst of party spirit on the part of the procureur du roi?”

“Oh, he laughed, and in that singular manner so peculiar to himself — half-malicious, half-ferocious; his smile, even, has always made me shudder, it has so very unnatural a look; he almost immediately rose and took his leave; then for the first time I observed the agitation of my grandfather, and I must tell you, Maximilian, that I am the only person capable of discerning emotion in the paralyzed frame of my poor afflicted relative. And I suspected that the conversation that had been carried on in his presence (for no one ever cares to refrain from saying and doing what they like before the dear old man, without the smallest regard to his feelings) had made a strong impression on his mind; for naturally enough, it must have pained him to hear the emperor he so devotedly loved and served spoken of in that depreciating manner.”

"The name of M. Noirtier," interposed Maximilian, "is celebrated throughout Europe; he was a statesman of high standing, and I know not whether you are aware, Valentine, that he took a leading part in every Bonapartean conspiracy set on foot during the restoration of the Bourbons."

"Oh, I have often heard whispers of things that seem to me most strange — the father a Bonapartist, the son a royalist; what can have been the reason of so singular a difference in parties and politics? But to resume my story: I turned towards my grandfather as though to question him as to the cause of his emotion; he looked expressively at the newspaper I had been reading.

"'What is the matter, dear grandfather?' said I, 'are you pleased?'

"He gave me a sign in the affirmative.

"'With what my father said just now?'

"He returned a sign in the negative.

"'Perhaps you liked what M. Danglars remarked?'

"Another sign in the negative.

"'Oh, then, you were glad to hear that M. Morrel (I durst not pronounce the dear name of Maximilian) had been made an officer of the Legion of Honor; was that it, dear grandpapa?'

"He signified assent in a way that convinced me he was more than glad — that he was delighted; only think of the poor old man's being so pleased to think that you, who were a perfect stranger to him, had been made an officer of the Legion of Honor! Perhaps, though, it was a mere whim on his part, for he is almost falling into a second childhood; but for all that, I love him dearly, and pray that he may long be spared to me."

"How singular," murmured Maximilian, "that your father should apparently hate the very mention of my name, whilst your grandfather, on the contrary — Well, well, it is no use to endeavor to find a reason for these things; strange, indeed, are the feelings brought into play by the action of party likes or dislikes."

"Hush!" cried Valentine, suddenly, "conceal yourself! Go, go! Some one comes!" Maximilian leaped at one bound into his crop of lucerne, which he commenced pulling up in the most pitiless manner, under the pretext of being occupied in weeding it.

"Mademoiselle! mademoiselle!" exclaimed a voice from behind the trees. "Madame is searching for you everywhere; there are visitors in the drawing-room."

"Who is it?" inquired Valentine, much agitated; "are they ladies?"

"Oh, no, mademoiselle! I believe it is some grand prince, or a duke, or a king, perhaps; stay, now, I remember, they said he was the Count of Monte-Cristo, and that he wished particularly to see you."

"I will come directly," said Valentine aloud.

The name caused an electric shock to the individual on the other side of the iron gate, on whose ear the "*I will come!*" of Valentine sounded the usual parting knell of all their interviews.

"Now, then," said Maximilian, as, tired with his unusual employment, he stopped to rest himself, by leaning on the handle of a spade he had taken care to furnish himself with, "I would give much to know how it comes about that the Count of Monte-Cristo is acquainted with M. de Villefort."

CHAPTER LII.

TOXICOLOGY.

It was really the Count of Monte-Cristo who had arrived at Madame de Villefort's, for the purpose of returning the visit of the procureur du roi, and at this name, as may be easily imagined, the whole house was in confusion.

Madame de Villefort, who was alone in her drawing-room when the count was announced, desired that her son might be brought thither instantly to renew his thanks to the count; and Edward, who heard nothing and nobody talked of for two whole days but this great personage, made all possible haste to come to him, not from obedience to his mother, not from any feeling of gratitude to the count, but from sheer curiosity, and that he might make some remark by the help of which he might find an opportunity for saying one of those small pertnesses which made his mother say :

"Oh, that sad child ! but pray excuse him, he is really so clever."

After the first and usual civilities, the count inquired after M. de Villefort.

"My husband dines with the chancellor," replied the young lady; "he has just gone, and I am sure he'll be exceedingly sorry not to have had the pleasure of seeing you before he went."

Two visitors who were there when the count arrived, having gazed at him with all their eyes, retired after that reasonable delay which politeness admits and curiosity requires.

"Ah! what is your sister Valentine doing?" inquired Madame de Villefort of Edward; "tell some one to bid her come here, that I may have the honor of introducing her to the count."

"You have a daughter, then, madame?" inquired the count; "very young, I presume?"

"The daughter of M. de Villefort," replied the young wife, "by his first marriage — a fine, well-grown girl."

"But melancholy," interrupted Master Edward, snatching the feathers out of the tail of a splendid paroquet, that was screaming on its gilded perch, in order to make a plume for his hat.

Madame de Villefort merely cried:

"Silence, Edward!"

She then added:

"This young madcap is, however, very nearly right, and merely re-echoes what he has heard me say with pain a hundred times; for Mademoiselle de Villefort is, in spite of all we can do to rouse her, of a melancholy disposition and taciturn habit, which frequently injure the effect of her beauty. But what detains her? Go, Edward, and see."

"Because they are looking for her where she is not to be found."

"And where are they looking for her?"

"With grandpa Noirtier."

"And do you think she is not there?"

"No, no, no, no, no, she is not there!" replied Edward, singing his words.

"And where is she, then? If you know, why don't you tell?"

"She is under the great chestnut-tree," replied the spoiled brat, as he gave, in spite of his mother's cries, live flies to the parrot, who appeared to relish such "small deer" excessively. Madame de Villefort stretched out her hand to ring, intending to direct her waiting-maid to the spot where she would find Valentine, when the young lady herself entered the apartment. She appeared much de-

jected, and any person who considered her attentively might have observed traces of recent tears in her eyes.

Valentine, whom we have in the rapid march of our narrative presented to our readers without formally introducing her, was a tall and graceful girl of nineteen years of age, with bright chestnut hair, deep blue eyes, and that languishing air, so full of distinction, which characterized her mother. Her white and slender fingers, her pearly neck, her cheeks tinted with varying hues, gave her at the first view the aspect of one of those lovely Englishwomen who have been so poetically compared in their manner to a swan admiring itself. She entered the apartment, and seeing near her step-mother the stranger of whom she had already heard so much, saluted him without any girlish awkwardness, or even lowering her eyes, and with an elegance that redoubled the count's attention. He rose to return the salutation.

"Mademoiselle de Villefort, my step-daughter," said Madame de Villefort to Monte-Cristo, leaning back on her sofa, and motioning towards Valentine with her hand.

"And M. de Monte-Cristo, King of China, Emperor of Cochin-China," said the young imp, looking slyly towards his sister.

Madame de Villefort at this really did turn pale, and was very nearly angry with this household plague who answered to the name of Edward; but the count, on the contrary, smiled and appeared to look at the boy complacently, which caused the maternal heart to bound again with joy and enthusiasm.

"But, madame," replied the count, continuing the conversation, and looking by turns at Madame de Villefort and Valentine, "have I not had the honor of meeting yourself and mademoiselle before? I could not help thinking so just now; the idea came over my mind, and as mademoiselle entered, the sight of her was an additional ray of light thrown on a confused remembrance; excuse me the remark."

"I do not think it likely, sir; Mademoiselle de Villefort is not very fond of society, and we very seldom go out," said the young lady.

"Then it was not in society that I met with mademoiselle or yourself, madame, or this charming little, merry boy. Besides, the Parisian world is entirely unknown to me, for, as I believe I told you, I have been in Paris but a very few days. No — but, perhaps, you will permit me to call to mind — stay!"

The count placed his hand on his brow, as if to collect his thoughts.

"No — it is somewhere — away from here — it was — I do not know — but it appears that this recollection is connected with a lovely sky and some religious *fête*; mademoiselle was holding flowers in her hand, the interesting boy was chasing a beautiful peacock in a garden, and you, madame, were under the trellis of some arbor. Pray come to my aid, madame; do not these circumstances bring to your mind some reminiscences?"

"No, indeed," replied Madame de Villefort; "and yet it appears to me, sir, that if I had met you anywhere, the recollection of you must have been imprinted on my memory."

"Perhaps M. le comte saw us in Italy," said Valentine, timidly.

"Yes, in Italy; it was in Italy most probably," replied Monte-Cristo; "you have travelled, then, in Italy, mademoiselle?"

"Yes; madame and I were there two years ago. The doctors were afraid of my lungs and prescribed the air of Naples. We went by Bologna, Perusa, and Rome."

"Ah, yes — true, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Monte-Cristo, as if this simple indication were sufficient to determine his recollections. "It was at Perusa, on the day of the Fête-Dieu, in the garden of the Hôtel des Postes, when chance brought us together; you, Madame de Villefort, and your son, I now remember having had the honor of meeting you."

"I perfectly well remember Perusa, sir, and the Hôtel des Postes, and the *fête* to which you allude," said Madame de Villefort; "but in vain do I tax my memory, of whose treachery I am ashamed, for I really do not recall to mind that I ever had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"It is strange, but neither do I recollect meeting with you," observed Valentine, raising her beautiful eyes to the count.

"But I remember it perfectly," interposed the darling Edward.

"I will assist your memory, madame," continued the count; "the day had been burning hot; you were waiting for horses, which were delayed in consequence of the festival. Mademoiselle was walking in the shade of the garden, and your son disappeared in pursuit of the bird."

"And I caught it, mamma; don't you remember?" interposed Edward, "and I pulled three such beautiful feathers out of his tail."

"You, madame, remained under the arbor formed by the vine; do you not remember that whilst you were seated on a stone bench, and whilst, as I told you, Mademoiselle de Villefort and your young son were absent, you conversed for a considerable time with somebody?"

"Yes, in truth, yes," answered the young lady, turning very red. "I do remember conversing with an individual wrapped in a long woollen mantle; he was a medical man, I think."

"Precisely so, madame; that man was myself. For a fortnight I had been at that hotel, during which period I had cured my valet de chambre of a fever, and my landlord of the jaundice, so that I really acquired a reputation as a skilful physician. We discoursed a long time, madame, on different subjects—of Perugino, of Raffaele, of manners, customs, of the famous *aqua tofano*, of which they had told you, I think you said, that certain individuals in Perusa had preserved the secret."

"Yes, true," replied Madame de Villefort, with a kind of uneasiness; "I remember now."

"I do not recollect now all the various subjects of which we discussed, madame," continued the count, with perfect calmness; "but I perfectly remember that, falling into the error which others had entertained respecting me, you consulted me as to the health of Mademoiselle de Villefort."

"Yes, really, sir, you were in fact a medical man," said Madame de Villefort, "since you had cured the sick."

"Molière or Beaumarchais would reply to you, madame, that it was precisely because I was not that I had cured my patients; for myself I am content to say to you that I have studied chemistry and the natural sciences somewhat deeply, but still only as an amateur, you understand."

At this moment the clock struck six.

"It is six o'clock," said Madame de Villefort, evidently agitated. "Valentine, will you not go and see if your grandpapa will have his dinner?"

Valentine rose, and saluting the count, left the apartment without replying a single word.

"Oh, madame!" said the count, when Valentine had left the room, "was it on my account that you sent Mademoiselle de Villefort away?"

"By no means," replied the young lady, quickly; "but this is the hour when we give to M. Noirtier the repast which supports his sad existence. You are aware, sir, of the deplorable condition of my husband's father?"

"Yes, madame, M. de Villefort spoke of it to me—a paralysis, I think."

"Alas! yes; there is an entire want of movement in the frame of the poor old gentleman; the mind alone is still active in this human machine, and that is faint and flickering, like the light of a lamp about to expire. But excuse me, sir, for talking of our domestic misfortunes; I interrupted you at the moment when you were telling me that you were a skilful chemist."

"No, madame, I did not say so much as that," replied the count, with a smile; "quite the contrary. I have studied chemistry, because, having determined to live in Eastern climates, I have been desirous of following the example of King Mithridates."

"*Mithridates, rex Ponticus!*" said the young scamp, as he tore some beautiful portraits out of a splendid album, "the individual who breakfasted every morning with a cup of poison *à la crème*."

"Edward, you naughty boy!" exclaimed Madame de Villefort, snatching the mutilated book from the urchin's grasp; "you are positively past bearing; you really disturb the conversation; go, leave us, and join your sister Valentine in dear grandpapa Noirtier's room."

"The album," said Edward, sulkily.

"What do you mean — the album?"

"I want the album."

"How dare you tear out the drawings?"

"Oh, it amuses me!"

"Go — go directly."

"I won't go unless you give me the album," said the boy, seating himself doggedly in an armchair; according to his habit of never giving way.

"Take it, then, and pray disturb us no longer," said Madame de Villefort, giving the album to Edward, who then went towards the door, led by his mother. The count followed her with his eyes.

"Let us see if she shuts the door after him," he muttered. Madame de Villefort closed the door carefully after the child, the count appearing not to notice her, then casting a scrutinizing glance around the chamber, the young wife returned to her chair, in which she seated herself.

"Allow me to observe, madame," said the count, with that kind tone he could assume so well, "you are really very severe with that dear, clever child."

"Oh, sometimes severity is quite necessary," replied Madame de Villefort, with all a mother's real firmness.

"It was his Cornelius Nepos that Master Edward was repeating when he referred to King Mithridates," continued the count, "and you interrupted him in a quotation which proves that his tutor has by no means neglected him, for your son is really advanced for his years."

"The fact is, M. le comte," answered the mother, agreeably flattered, "he has great aptitude, and learns all that is set before him. He has but one fault—he is somewhat wilful; but really, on referring for the moment to what he said, do you truly believe that Mithridates used these precautions, and that these precautions were efficacious?"

"I think so, madame, because I—I who now address you, have made use of them, that I might not be poisoned, at Naples, at Palermo, and at Smyrna—that is to say, on three several occasions of my life, when, but for these precautions, I must have lost my life."

"And your precautions were successful?"

"Completely so."

"Yes, I remember now your mentioning to me at Perugia something of this sort."

"Indeed! did I?" said the count, with an air of surprise remarkably well counterfeited; "I really did not remember it."

"I inquired of you if poisons acted equally and with the same effect on men of the north as on men of the south; and you answered me that the cold and sluggish habits of the north did not present the same aptitude as the rich and energetic temperaments of the natives of the south."

"And that is the case," observed Monte-Cristo. "I have seen Russians devour, without being visibly inconvenienced, vegetable substances which would infallibly have killed a Neapolitan or an Arab."

"And you really believe the result would be still more sure with us than in the East, and in the midst of our fogs and rains a man would habituate himself more easily

than in a warm latitude to this progressive absorption of poison?"

"Certainly; it being at the same time perfectly understood that he should have been duly fortified against the poison to which he had not been accustomed."

"Yes, I understand that; and how would you habituate yourself, for instance, or rather how did you habituate yourself to it?"

"Oh, very easily. Suppose you knew beforehand the poison that would be made use of against you; suppose the poison was, for instance, brucine——"

"Brucine is extracted from the *Brucæa ferruginea*, is it not?" inquired Madame de Villefort.

"Precisely, madame," replied Monte-Cristo; "but I perceive I have not much to teach you. Allow me to compliment you on your knowledge; such learning is very rare amongst ladies."

"Oh, I am aware of that," said Madame de Villefort; "but I have a passion for the occult sciences, which speak to the imagination like poetry, and are reducible to figures like an algebraic equation. But go on, I pray of you; what you say interests me to the greatest degree."

"Well," replied Monte-Cristo, "suppose, then, that this poison was brucine, and you were to take a milligramme the first day, two milligrammes the second day, and so on. Well, at the end of ten days you would have taken a centigramme; at the end of twenty days, increasing another milligramme, you would have taken three hundred centigrammes, that is to say, a dose which you would support without inconvenience, and which would be very dangerous for any other person who had not taken the same precautions as yourself. Well, then, at the end of a month, when drinking water from the same *carafe*, you would kill the person who had drunk this water as well as yourself, without your perceiving, otherwise than from slight inconvenience, that there was any poisonous substance mingled with this water."

"Do you know any other counter-poison?"

"I do not."

"I have often read and read again the history of Mithridates," said Madame de Villefort, in a tone of reflection, "and had always considered it as a fable."

"No, madame; contrary to most history, it is a truth; but what you tell me, madame, what you inquire of me, is not the result of a chance question, for two years since you asked me the same questions, and said, too, that for a very long time this history of Mithridates had occupied your mind."

"True, sir. The two favorite studies of my youth were botany and mineralogy; and subsequently, when I learned that the use of simples frequently explained the whole history of a people, and the entire life of individuals in the East, as flowers betoken and symbolize a love-affair, I have regretted that I was not a man, that I might have been a Flamel, a Fontana, or a Cabanis."

"And the more, madame," said Monte-Cristo, "as the Orientals do not confine themselves, as did Mithridates, to make a cuirass of his poisons, but they also make them a dagger. Science becomes, in their hands, not only a defensive weapon, but still more frequently an offensive one; the one serves against all their physical sufferings, the other against all their enemies. With opium, with belladonna, with brucea, snake-wood, the cherry-laurel, they put to sleep all those who would arouse them. There is not one of those women, Egyptian, Turk, or Greek, whom here you call 'good women,' who does not know how, by means of chemistry, to stupefy a doctor, and in psychology to amaze a confessor."

"Really!" said Madame de Villefort, whose eyes sparkled with strange fire at this conversation.

"Eh, indeed! Yes, madame," continued Monte-Cristo, "the secret dramas of the East begin and end thus, from the plant which can create love to the plant that can cause death — from the draught which opens heaven before your

eyes to that which plunges a man in hell! There are as many shades of every kind as there are caprices and peculiarities in human, physical, and moral natures, and I will say further, the art of these chemists knows excellently well how to accommodate and proportion the remedy and the ill to its yearnings of love or its desires for vengeance."

"But, sir," remarked the lady, "these Eastern societies, in the midst of which you have passed a portion of your existence, are as wild and visionary as the tales that come from their strange land. A man can easily be put out of the way, there, then; it is, indeed, the Bagdad and Bassora of M. Galland. The sultans and viziers, who rule over such society, and who constitute what in France we call the government, are, in fact, really these Haroun-al-Raschids and Giaffars, who not only pardon a poisoner, but even make him a prime minister if his crime has been an ingenious one, and who, under such circumstances, have the whole story written in letters of gold, to divert their hours of idleness and *ennui*."

"By no means, madame; the fanciful no longer exists in the East. There are there now, disguised under other names, and concealed under other costumes, agents of police, magistrates, attorney-generals, and bailiffs. They hang, behead, and impale their criminals in the most agreeable possible manner; but some of these, like clever rogues, have contrived to escape human justice, and succeed in their fraudulent enterprises by cunning stratagems. Amongst us a simpleton, possessed by the demon of hate or cupidity, who has an enemy to destroy, or some near relation to dispose of, goes straight to the grocer's or druggist's, gives a false name, which leads more easily to his detection than his real one, and purchases, under a pretext that the rats prevent him from sleeping, five or six pennyworth of arsenic — if he really is a cunning fellow, he goes to five or six different druggists or grocers, and thereby becomes only five or six times more easily traced — then,

when he has acquired his specific, he administers duly to his enemy, or near kinsman, a dose of arsenic which would make a mammoth or mastodon burst, and which, without rhyme or reason, makes his victim utter groans which alarm the entire neighborhood. Then arrive a crowd of policemen and constables. They fetch a doctor, who opens the dead body, and collects from the entrails and stomach a quantity of arsenic in a spoon. Next day a hundred newspapers relate the fact with the names of the victim and the murderer. The same evening the grocer or grocers, druggist or druggists, come and say, 'It was I who sold the arsenic to the gentleman accused;' and rather than not recognize the guilty purchaser, they will recognize twenty. Then the foolish criminal is taken, imprisoned, interrogated, confronted, confounded, condemned, and cut off by hemp or steel; or, if the criminal be a woman of some consideration, they lock her up for life. This is the way in which you northerners understand chemistry; Madame Desrues was, however, I must confess, more skilful."

"What would you have, sir?" said the lady, laughing; "we do what we can. All the world has not the secret of the Medicis or the Borgias."

"Now," replied the count, shrugging his shoulders, "shall I tell you the cause of all these stupidities? It is because at your theatres, by what at least I could judge by reading the pieces they play, they see persons swallow the contents of a vial, or suck the bottom of a ring, and fall dead instantly. Five minutes afterwards the curtain falls, and the spectators depart. They are ignorant of the consequences of the murder; they see neither the commissary of police with his badge of office, nor the corporal with his four men; and that is an authority for weak brains to believe that this is the way that things pass. But go a little way from France — go either to Aleppo or Cairo, or only to Naples or Rome, and you will see people passing by you in the streets — people erect, smiling, fresh-colored, of whom Asmodeus, if you were holding on by the skirt of

his mantle, would say, 'That man was poisoned three weeks ago; he will be a dead man in a month.'"

"Then," remarked Madame de Villefort, "they have again discovered the secret of the famous *aqua tofana* that they said was lost at Perugia."

"Eh, indeed, does mankind ever lose anything? The arts are removed, and make a tour of the world; things change their names, and the vulgar do not follow them — that is all; but there is always the same result. Poison acts particularly on one organ or the other; one on the stomach, another on the brain, another on the intestines. Well, the poison brings on a cough, the cough an inflammation of the lungs, or some other complaint catalogued in the book of science, which, however, by no means precludes it from being decidedly mortal; and, if it were not, would be sure to become so, thanks to the remedies applied by foolish doctors, who are generally bad chemists, and which will act in favor or against the malady as you please, and then there is a human being killed according to all the rules of art and skill, and of whom justice learns nothing, as was said by a terrible chemist of my acquaintance, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte de Taormine, in Sicily, who had studied these national phenomena very profoundly."

"It is quite frightful, but deeply interesting," said the young lady, motionless with attention. "I thought, I must confess, that these tales were inventions of the Middle Ages."

"Yes, no doubt, but improved upon by ours. What is the use of time, encouragements, medals, crosses, Montyon prizes, etc., if they do not lead society toward more complete perfection? Yet man will never be perfect until he learns to create and destroy; he does know how to destroy, and that is half-way on the road."

"So," added Madame de Villefort, constantly returning to her object, "the poisons of the Borgias, the Medicis, the Renes, the Ruggieris, and later, probably that of Baron de

Trenck, whose story has been so misused by modern drama and romance —— ”

“Were objects of art, madame, and nothing more,” replied the count. “Do you suppose that the real *savant* addresses himself stupidly to the mere individual? By no means. Science loves eccentricities, leaps and bounds, trials of strength, fancies, if I may be allowed so to term them. Thus, for instance, the excellent Abbé Adelmonte, of whom I spoke to you just now, made in this way some marvellous experiments.”

“Really ? ”

“Yes; I will mention one to you. He had a remarkably fine garden, full of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. From amongst these vegetables he selected the most simple — a cabbage for instance. For three days he watered this cabbage with a distillation of arsenic; on the third, the cabbage began to droop and turn yellow. At that moment he cut it. In the eyes of everybody it seemed fit for table, and preserved its wholesome appearance. It was only poisoned to the Abbé Adelmonte. He then took the cabbage to the room where he had rabbits, for the Abbé Adelmonte had a collection of rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs, equally fine as his collection of vegetables, flowers, and fruit. Well, the Abbé Adelmonte took a rabbit, and made it eat a leaf of the cabbage. The rabbit died. What magistrate would find or even venture to insinuate anything against this? What procureur du roi has ever ventured to draw up an accusation against M. Magendie or M. Flourens, in consequence of the rabbits, cats, and guinea-pigs they have killed? — not one. So, then, the rabbit dies, and justice takes no notice. This rabbit dead, the Abbé Adelmonte has its entrails taken out by his cook and thrown on the dunghill; on this dunghill was a hen, who, pecking these intestines, was, in her turn, taken ill, and dies next day. At the moment when she was struggling in the convulsions of death, a vulture was flying by (there are a good many vultures in Adelmonte’s

country); this bird darts on the dead bird and carries it away to a rock, where he dines off his prey. Three days afterward, this poor vulture, who has been very much indisposed since that dinner, feels very giddy, suddenly, whilst flying aloft in the clouds, and falls heavily into a fish-pond. The pike, eels, and carp eat greedily always, as everybody knows; well, they feast on the vulture. Well, suppose the next day, one of these eels, or pike, or carp is served at your table, poisoned as they are to the third generation. Well, then, your guest will be poisoned in the fifth generation, and die at the end of eight or ten days, of pains in the intestines, sickness, or abscess of the pylorus. The doctors open the body and say, with an air of profound learning, 'The subject has died of a tumor on the liver, or typhoid fever!'"

"But," remarked Madame de Villefort, "all these circumstances which you link thus one to another may be broken by the least accident; the vulture may not pass at the precise moment, or may fall a hundred yards from the fish-pond."

"Ah, this it is which is art. To be a great chemist in the East, we must direct chance; and this is to be achieved."

Madame de Villefort was deep in thought, yet listened attentively.

"But," she exclaimed suddenly, "arsenic is indelible, indestructible; in what way soever it is absorbed, it will be found again in the body of the creature from the moment when it has been taken in sufficient quantity to cause death."

"Precisely so," cried Monte-Cristo — "precisely so; and this is what I said to my worthy Adelmonte. He reflected, smiled, and replied to me by a Sicilian proverb, which I believe is also a French proverb: 'My son, the world was not made in a day — but in seven. Return on Sunday.' On the Sunday following I did return to him. Instead of having watered his cabbage with arsenic, he had watered

it this time with a solution of salts, having their bases in strychnine, *strychnos colubrina*, as the learned term it. Now, the cabbage had not the slightest appearance of disease in the world, and the rabbit had not the smallest distrust; yet, five minutes afterwards, the rabbit was dead. The fowl pecked at the rabbit, and next day was a dead hen. This time we were the vultures; so we opened the bird, and this time all particular symptoms had disappeared: there were only general symptoms. There was no peculiar indication in any organ — an excitement of the nervous system — that was it; a case of cerebral congestion — nothing more. The fowl had not been poisoned — she had died of apoplexy. Apoplexy is a rare disease amongst fowls, I believe, but very common amongst men.”

Madame de Villefort appeared more and more reflective.

“It is very fortunate,” she observed, “that such substances could only be prepared by chemists, for else, really, all the world would be poisoning each other.”

“By chemists and persons who have a taste for chemistry,” said Monte-Cristo, carelessly.

“And then,” said Madame de Villefort, endeavoring by a struggle, and with effort, to get away from her thoughts, “however skilfully it is prepared, crime is always crime; and if it avoid human scrutiny, it does not escape the eye of God. The Orientals are stronger than we are in cases of conscience, and very prudently have no hell — that is the point.”

“Really, madame, this is a scruple which naturally must occur to a pure mind like yours, but which would easily yield before sound reasoning. The bad side of human thought will always be defined by the paradox of Jean Jacques Rousseau, you know — the mandarin, who was killed at 500 leagues distance by raising the tip of the finger. Man’s whole life passes in doing these things, and his intellect is exhausted by reflecting on them. You will find very few persons who will go and brutally thrust a knife in the heart of a fellow-creature, or will administer

to him, in order to remove him from that surface of the globe on which we now move with life and animation, that quantity of arsenic of which we just now talked. Such a thing is really out of rule — eccentric or stupid. To attain such a point, the blood must be warmed to thirty-six degrees, the pulse be, at least, ninety, and the feelings excited beyond the ordinary limit. But if passing, as we do in philology, from the word itself to its softened synonym, you make an elimination — a simple change of words: instead of committing an ignoble assassination, if you merely and simply remove from your path the individual who is in your way, and that without shock or violence, without the display of those sufferings which, becoming a punishment, make a martyr of the victim, and of him who inflicts them a butcher, in every sense of the word; if there be no blood, no groans, no convulsions, and, above all, that horrid and compromising moment of accomplishing the act, then one escapes the clutch of the human law, which says to you, ‘Do not disturb society!’ This is the mode in which they manage these things, and succeed, in Eastern climes, where there are grave and phlegmatic persons who care very little for the questions of time in conjunctures of importance.”

“Yet conscience remains!” remarked Madame de Villefort, in an agitated voice, and with a stifled sigh.

“Yes,” replied Monte-Cristo — “happily, yes! conscience does remain; and if it did not, how wretched we should be! After every action requiring exertion, it is conscience that saves us, for it supplies us with a thousand good excuses, of which we alone are judges; and these reasons, how excellent soever in producing sleep, would avail us but very little before a tribunal when we were tried for our lives. Thus, Richard III., for instance, was marvelously served by his conscience after the putting away of the two children of Edward IV.; in fact, he could say, ‘These two children of a cruel and persecuting king, who have inherited the vices of their father, which I alone

could perceive in their juvenile propensities — these two children are impediments in my way of promoting the happiness of the English people, whose unhappiness they (the children) would infallibly have caused.' Thus was Lady Macbeth served by her conscience, when she sought to give her son, and not her husband (whatever Shakespeare may say) a throne! Ah! maternal love is a great virtue, a powerful motive, so powerful that it excuses a multitude of things, even if after Duncan's death Lady Macbeth had been at all pricked by her conscience."

Madame de Villefort listened with avidity to these appalling maxims and horrible paradoxes, delivered by the count with that ironical simplicity which was peculiar to him.

After a moment's silence, the lady inquired:

"Do you know," she said, "M. le comte, that you are a very terrible reasoner, and that you look at the world through a somewhat distempered medium? Have you really measured the world by scrutinies, or through alembics and crucibles? For, truth to say, you are a great chemist, and the elixir you administered to my son, which recalled him to life almost instantaneously —"

"Oh, do not place any reliance on that, madame; *one* drop of that elixir sufficed to recall life to a dying child, but three drops would have impelled the blood into his lungs in such a way as to have produced most violent palpitations; six would have suspended his respiration, and caused syncope more serious than that in which he was; ten would have destroyed him. You know, madame, how suddenly I snatched him from those vials which he so imprudently touched?"

"Is it, then, so terrible a poison?"

"Oh, no! In the first place, let us agree that the word poison does not exist; because, in medicine use is made of the most violent poisons, which become, according as they are made use of, most salutary remedies."

"What, then, is it?"

"A skilful preparation of my friend's, the worthy Abbé Adelmonte, who taught me the use of it."

"Oh!" observed Madame de Villefort; "it must be an admirable anti-spasmodic."

"Perfect, madame, as you have seen," replied the count; "and I frequently make use of it — with all possible prudence, though, be it observed," he added, with a smile of intelligence.

"Most assuredly," responded Madame de Villefort, in the same tone; "as for me, so nervous, and so subject to fainting-fits, I should require a Doctor Adelmonte to invent for me some means of breathing freely, and tranquillizing my mind, in the fear I have of dying some fine day of suffocation. In the meanwhile, as the thing is difficult to find in France, and your abbé is not probably disposed to make a journey to Paris on my account, I must continue to use the anti-spasmodics of M. Planche; and mint and Hoffmann's drops are amongst my favorite remedies. Here are some lozenges which I have made up on purpose; they are compounded doubly strong."

Monte-Cristo opened the tortoise-shell box which the lady presented to him, and imbibed the odor of the pastilles with the air of an amateur who thoroughly appreciated their composition.

"They are, indeed, exquisite," he said; "but as they are necessarily submitted to the process of deglutition — a function which it is frequently impossible for a fainting person to accomplish — I prefer my own specific."

"Undoubtedly, and so should I prefer it, after the effects I have seen produced; but of course it is a secret, and I am not so indiscreet as to ask it of you."

"But I," said Monte-Cristo, rising as he spoke — "I am gallant enough to offer it you."

"Oh, sir!"

"Only remember one thing: a small dose is a remedy, a large one is poison. One drop will restore life, as you

have witnessed; five or six will inevitably kill, and in a way the more terrible, inasmuch as, poured into a glass of wine, it would not in the slightest degree affect its flavor. But I say no more, madame; it is really as if I were advising you."

The clock struck half-past six, and a lady was announced, a friend of Madame de Villefort, who came to dine with her.

"If I had had the honor of seeing you for the third or fourth time, M. le comte, instead of only for the second," said Madame de Villefort—"if I had had the honor of being your friend, instead of only having the happiness of lying under an obligation to you, I should insist on detaining you to dinner, and not allow myself to be daunted by a first refusal."

"A thousand thanks, madame," replied Monte-Cristo, "but I have an engagement which I cannot break; I have promised to escort to the Académie a Greek princess of my acquaintance, who has never seen your grand opera, and who relies on me to conduct her thither."

"Adieu, then, sir! and do not forget my recipe."

"Ah, in truth, madame, to do that, I must forget the hour's conversation I have had with you, which is indeed impossible."

Monte-Cristo bowed, and left the house.

Madame de Villefort remained immersed in thought.

"He is a very strange man," she said, "and in my opinion is himself the Adelmonte he talks about."

As to Monte-Cristo, the result had certainly surpassed his utmost expectations.

"Good!" said he, as he went away; "that is a fruitful soil, and I feel certain that the seed sown will not be cast on barren ground."

Next morning, faithful to his promise, he sent the prescription requested.

CHAPTER LIII.

ROBERT LE DIABLE.

THE pretext of an opera engagement was so much the more feasible, as there chanced to be on that very night a more than ordinary attraction at the Académie Royale. Levasseur, who had been suffering under severe illness, made his reappearance in the character of Bertram, and, as usual, the announcement of the most admired production of the favorite composer of the day had attracted an audience consisting of the very *élite* of Parisian fashion. Morcerf, like most other young men of rank and fortune, had his orchestral stall, with the certainty of always finding a seat in at least a dozen of the principal boxes occupied by persons of his acquaintance; he had, moreover, his right of entry into the omnibus box. Château-Renaud rented a stall beside his own, while Beauchamp, in his editorial capacity, had unlimited range all over the theatre.

It happened that on that particular night the minister's box was placed at the disposal of Lucien Debray, who offered it to the Count de Morcerf, who again, upon his mother's rejection of it, sent it to Danglars, with an intimation that he should probably do himself the honor of joining the baroness and her daughter during the evening in the event of their accepting the box in question. The ladies received the offer with too much pleasure to dream of a refusal. To no class of persons is the presentation of a gratuitous opera-box more acceptable than to the wealthy millionaire, who still hugs economy while boasting of carrying a king's ransom in his waistcoat pocket.

Danglars had, however, protested against showing him-

self in a ministerial box, declaring that his political principles, as well as being a member of the opposition party, would not permit him so to commit himself; the baroness had, therefore, dispatched a note to Lucien Debray, bidding him call for them, it being wholly impossible for her to go alone with her daughter to the opera. There is no gainsaying the plain fact that a very unfavorable construction would have been put upon the circumstance of two females going together to a public place, while the addition of a third, in the person of her mother's admitted lover, enabled Mademoiselle Danglars to defy malice and ill-nature while visiting so celebrated a place of amusement. Thus, then, we perceive that for a mother, however innocent and pure-minded, to conduct her child alone to operas or spectacles, would be deemed a breach of decorum; but to go thither under the guidance of one who, if not actually her seducer, might in time become so, made all right, and set the world at defiance; let others reconcile these strange inconsistencies if they will; we confess it above our powers!

The curtain rose as usual to an almost empty house, it being one of the absurdities of Parisian fashion never to appear at the opera until after the commencement of the performance, so that the first act is generally played without the slightest attention being paid to it, that part of the audience already assembled being too much occupied in observing the fresh arrivals, and noting each batch of *élégantes* as they take possession of their boxes, to have eyes or ears for the business of the stage, while the noise of opening and shutting doors, with the mingled buzz of many conversations, effectually prevents even those few who would listen to the orchestra from being able to do so.

"Surely!" said Albert, as the door of a box on the first circle opened, and a lady entered, resplendent with beauty and jewels, "that must be the Countess G——."

"And who may she be, pray?" inquired Château-Renaud, carelessly.

"What a question! Now do you know, baron, I have a great mind to pick a quarrel with you for asking it, as if

"Ah, to be sure!" replied Château-Renaud, "I remember now — your lovely Venetian, is it not?"

"Herself!"

At this moment the countess perceived Albert, and returned his salutation with a graceful smile.

"You are acquainted with her, it seems?" said Château-Renaud.

"Franz introduced me to her at Rome," replied Albert.

"Well, then, will you do as much for me in Paris as he did for you in the 'Queen of Cities'?"

"With much pleasure."

"Silence!" exclaimed the audience.

This manifestation on the part of the spectators of their wish to be allowed to enjoy the rich music then issuing from the stage and orchestra, produced not the slightest effect on the two young men, who continued talking as though they had not even heard it.

"The countess was present at the races in the Champ de Mars," said Château-Renaud.

"To-day?"

"Yes."

"Bless me! I quite forgot the races — did you bet?"

"Oh, merely a paltry fifty louis."

"And who was the winner?"

"Nautilus. I betted on him."

"But there were three races, were there not?"

"Yes; there was the prize given by the Jockey Club — a gold cup, you know — and a very singular circumstance occurred about that race."

"What was it?"

"Silence!" again vociferated the music-loving part of the audience.

"Why, that it was gained by a horse and rider utterly unknown on the course."

"Is that possible?"

"True as day; the fact was, nobody had observed a horse entered by the name of Vampa, or that of a jockey styled Job, when, at the last moment, a splendid roan, mounted by a jockey about as big as your fist, presented themselves at the starting-post; they were obliged to stuff at least twenty pounds weight of shot in the small rider's pockets to make him weight; but with all that he outstripped Ariel and Barbaro, against whom he ran, by at least three whole lengths."

"And was it not found out at last to whom that horse and jockey belonged?"

"No."

"You say that the horse was entered under the name of Vampa?"

"Exactly; that was the title."

"Then," answered Albert, "I am better informed than you are, and know who the owner of that horse was!"

"Silence there!" cried the whole collective force of the *parterre* (or pit). And this time the tone and manner in which the command was given betokened such growing hostility, that the two young men perceived for the first time that the mandate was addressed to them; leisurely turning around, they calmly scrutinized the various countenances around them, as though demanding some one person who would take upon himself the responsibility of what they deemed excessive impertinence; but as no one responded to the challenge, the friends turned again to the front of the theatre, and affected to busy themselves with the stage.

At this moment the door of the minister's box opened, and Madame Danglars, accompanied by her daughter, entered, escorted by Lucien Debray, who assiduously conducted them to their seats.

"Ha, ha!" said Château-Renaud, "here come some friends of yours, viscount! What are you looking at there? Don't you see they are trying to catch your eye?"

Albert turned around just in time to receive a gracious wave of the fan from madame la baronne; as for Mademoiselle Eugenie, she scarcely vouchsafed to waste the glances of her large black eyes even upon the business of the stage.

"I tell you what, my dear fellow," said Château-Renaud, "I cannot imagine what objection you can possibly have to Mademoiselle Danglars — that is, setting aside her want of ancestry and somewhat inferior rank, which, by the way, I don't think you care very much about; now, barring all that, I mean to say she is a deuced fine girl!"

"Handsome, certainly," replied Albert, "but not to my taste, which, I confess, inclines to a softer, gentler, and more feminine style than that possessed by the young lady in question."

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Château-Renaud, who, because he had seen his thirtieth summer, fancied himself duly warranted in assuming a sort of paternal air with his more youthful friend, "you young people are never satisfied; why, what would you have more? Your parents have chosen you a bride who might serve as the living model of the 'Hunting Diana,' and yet you are not content."

"No, for that very resemblance affrights me; I should have liked something more in the manner of the Venus of Milo or Capua; but this chase-loving Diana, continually surrounded by her nymphs, gives me a sort of alarm, lest she should some day entail on me the fate of Actæon."

And, indeed, it required but one glance at Mademoiselle Danglars to comprehend the nature, as well as justness, of Morcerf's remark: "she was certainly handsome," but her beauty was of too marked and decided a character to please a fastidious taste; her hair was raven black, but amid its natural waves might be seen a species of rebellion to the hand that sought to band and braid it; her eyes, of the same color as her hair, were richly fringed and surmounted by well-arched brows, whose great defect,

however, consisted in an almost habitual frown; while her whole physiognomy wore that expression of firmness and decision so little in accordance with the gentler attributes of her sex; her nose was precisely what a statuary would have chosen for a chiselled Juno. Her mouth, which might have been found fault with as too large, displayed teeth of pearly whiteness, rendered still more conspicuous by the over-redness of her lips, beside which her naturally pale complexion seemed even more colorless. But that which completed the almost masculine look Morcerf found so little to his taste, was a dark mole, of much larger dimensions than those freaks of nature generally are, placed just at the corner of her mouth; and the effect tended to increase the expression of unbending resolution and self-dependence that formed the characteristics of her countenance. The rest of Mademoiselle Eugenie's person was in perfect keeping with the head just described; she, indeed, reminded you of the Hunting Diana, as Château-Renaud observed, but with a more haughty and resolute air than statuaries have bestowed on the "Chaste Goddess of the Silver Bow." As regarded her attainments, the only fault to be found with them was the same a fastidious connoisseur might have found with her beauty — that they were somewhat too erudite and masculine for so young a person; she was a perfect linguist; a first-rate artist; wrote poetry, and composed music; to the study of the latter she professed to be entirely devoted, studying it with indefatigable perseverance, assisted by a schoolfellow who, having been educated with the view of turning her talents to account, was now busily engaged in improving her vocal powers, in order to take (what she was assured by her friends she would infallibly attain) a leading position at the Academy of Music. It was rumored that she was an object of almost paternal interest to one of the principal composers of the day, who excited her to spare no pains in the cultivation of her voice, which might hereafter prove a source of wealth and independence. But this

counsel effectually decided Mademoiselle Danglars never to commit herself by being seen in public with one destined for a theatrical life; and acting upon this principle, the banker's daughter, though perfectly willing to allow Mademoiselle Louise d'Armilly (for so was the future *débutante* named) to practise with her through the day, took especial care not to compromise herself by being seen in her company. Still, though not actually received at the Hôtel Danglars in the light of an acknowledged friend, Louise was treated with far more kindness and consideration than is usually bestowed on that most unfortunate class of deserving females styled governesses.

The curtain fell almost immediately after the entrance of Madame Danglars into her box, the band quitted the orchestra for the accustomed half-hour's interval allowed between the acts, and the audience were left at liberty to promenade the salon or lobbies, or to pay and receive visits in their respective boxes. Morcerf and Château-Renaud were among the first to avail themselves of this permission. For an instant the idea struck Madame Danglars that this eagerness on the part of the young viscount arose from his impatience to join her party, and she whispered her expectations to her daughter that Albert was hurrying to pay his respects to them. Mademoiselle Eugénie, however, merely returned a dissenting movement of the head, while, with a cold smile, she directed the attention of her mother to an opposite *loge* situated on the first circle, in which sat the Countess G——, and where Morcerf had just made his appearance.

"So, we meet again, my travelling friend, do we?" cried the countess, extending her hand to him with all the warmth and cordiality of an old acquaintance; "it was really very good of you to recognize me so quickly, and still more so to bestow your first visit on me."

"Be assured," replied Albert, "that if I had been aware of your arrival in Paris, and had known your address, I should have paid my respects to you long ere this. Allow

me to introduce my friend, Baron de Château-Renaud, one of the rare specimens of real gentlemen now to be found in France, and from whom I have just learned that you were a spectator of the races in the Champ de Mars yesterday."

Château-Renaud bowed to the countess.

"Were you at the races, then, M. le baron?" inquired the countess, eagerly.

"I was."

"Well, then," pursued Madame G——, with considerable animation, "you can probably tell me to whom belonged the winner of the Jockey Club stakes?"

"I am sorry to say I cannot," replied the baron; "and I was just asking the same question of my friend Albert."

"Are you very anxious to know, madame la comtesse?" asked Albert.

"To know what?"

"The name of the owner of the winning horse."

"Excessively; only imagine—but do tell me, M. le vicomte, whether you really are acquainted with it or no?"

"I beg your pardon, madame, but were you not about to relate some story? You said, 'Only imagine'—and then paused. Pray, continue."

"Well, then, listen! You must know I felt so interested for the splendid roan horse, with his elegant little rider so tastefully dressed in a pink satin jacket and cap, that I could not help praying for their success with as much earnestness as though the half of my fortune were at stake; and when I saw them outstrip all the others, and come to the winning-post in such gallant style, I actually clapped my hands with joy. Imagine my surprise, when, upon returning home, the first object I met on the staircase was the identical jockey in the pink jacket. I concluded that, by some singular chance, the owner of the winning horse must live in the same hotel as myself; but lo! as I entered my apartments I beheld

the very gold cup awarded as a prize to the unknown horse and rider. Inside the cup was a small piece of paper, on which were written these words, 'From Lord Ruthven to Countess G——.' "

"Precisely; I was sure of it," said Morcerf.

"Sure of what?"

"That the owner of the horse was Lord Ruthven himself."

"What Lord Ruthven do you mean?"

"Why, our Lord Ruthven — the Vampire of the Salle Argentino!"

"Mercy upon me!" exclaimed the countess; "is he here, too?"

"To be sure — why not?"

"And you visit him? — meet him at your own house and elsewhere?"

"I assure you he is my most intimate friend, and M. de Château-Renaud has also the honor of his acquaintance."

"But what makes you so convinced of his being the winner of the Jockey Club prize?"

"Was not the winning horse entered by the name of Vampa?"

"What of that?"

"Why, do you not recollect it was the appellation of the celebrated bandit by whom I was made prisoner?"

"True."

"And from whose hands the count extricated me in so wonderful a manner?"

"To be sure, I remember it all now."

"Now, I argue from the circumstance of the horse and bandit bearing the same singular name, that the count was the person to whom the unknown horse belonged."

"But what could have been his motive for sending the cup to me?"

"In the first place, because I had spoken much of you to him, as you may believe; and in the second, because

he delighted to see a countrywoman take so lively an interest in his success."

"I trust you never repeated to the count all the foolish remarks we used to make about him?"

"I should not like to affirm upon oath that I have not. Besides, his presenting you the cup under the name of Lord Ruthven proves his knowledge of the comparison instituted between himself and that individual."

"Oh, but that is dreadful! Why, the man must owe me a fearful grudge for so doing."

"Does his offering you the fruits of his victory seem like the conduct of one who felt ill-will towards you?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Well, then ——"

"And so this singular being is in Paris?"

"He is."

"And what effect does he produce?"

"Why," said Albert, "certainly, during the first week of his arrival here, he was the great lion of the day; nothing else was thought of or talked about but the wonderful Count of Monte-Cristo and his extraordinary actions; then the coronation of the Queen of England took place, followed almost immediately afterwards by the robbery of Mademoiselle Mars's diamonds; and two such interesting events turned public attention into other channels."

"My good fellow," said Château-Renaud, "the count happens to be so great a favorite of yours, that you treat him as carefully and delicately as though he were your best and most intimate friend. Do not believe what Albert is telling you, madame la comtesse; so far from the sensation excited in the Parisian circles by the appearance of the Count of Monte-Cristo having abated, I take upon myself to declare that it is as strong as ever. His first astounding act upon coming amongst us was to present a pair of horses, worth 32,000 francs, to Madame Danglars; his second, the almost miraculous preservation of Madame de Villefort's life; now it seems that

he has carried off the prize awarded by the Jockey Club! I, therefore, assert and maintain, in spite of whatever Morcerf may advance, that not only is the count the object of universal remark, interest, and curiosity, at this present moment, but also that he will continue to be so while he pleases to exhibit an eccentricity of conduct and action which, after all, may be his ordinary mode of amusing himself as well as the world."

"Perhaps you are right," said Morcerf; "but just cast your eyes towards the box formerly belonging to the Russian ambassador, and tell me, if you can, who is the present occupant of it?"

"Which box do you mean?"

"The one between the pillars on the first tier — it seems to have been fitted up entirely afresh."

"Did you observe any one during the first act?"

"Where?"

"In that box."

"No!" replied the countess; "it was certainly empty during the first act." Then, resuming the subject of their previous conversation, she said, "And so you really believe it was your mysterious Count of Monte-Cristo that gained the prize?"

"I am sure of it."

"And who afterwards sent the golden cup to me?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then, do you know," said the countess, "I have a strong inclination to return it? I cannot understand receiving such presents from a person wholly unknown to me."

"Do no such thing, I beg of you; it would only produce a second goblet, formed of a magnificent sapphire, or hollowed out of a gigantic ruby. It is his manner of acting, and you must take him as you find him."

At this moment the bell rang to announce the drawing up of the curtain for the second act. Albert rose to return to his place.

"Shall I see you again?" asked the countess.

"If you will permit me to make a second visit during the next pause in the opera, I will do myself the honor of coming to inquire whether there is anything in which I can be useful to you in Paris?"

"Pray take notice," said the countess, "that my present residence is 22 Rue de Rivoli, and that I am at home to my friends every Saturday evening. So, now, you gentlemen cannot plead ignorance both of when and where you may see me, if so inclined."

The young men bowed and quitted the box. Upon reaching their stalls, they found the whole of the audience in the parterre standing up and directing their gaze towards the box formerly possessed by the ambassador of Russia. Following the universal example, the friends perceived that an individual of from thirty-five to forty years of age, dressed in deep black, had just entered, accompanied by a female dressed after the Eastern style; the young lady was young and surpassingly beautiful, while the rich magnificence of her attire drew all eyes upon her.

"By heavens!" said Albert, "it is Monte-Cristo himself with his fair Greek!"

The strangers were, indeed, no other than the Count and Haydee. The sensation excited by the beauty and dazzling appearance of the latter soon communicated itself to every part of the theatre, and even ladies leaned forward from their boxes to admire the many-colored coruscations that darted their sparkling beams whenever the superb diamonds worn by the young Greek played and glittered among the cut-glass lustres with their waxen lights.

The second act passed away during one continued buzz of voices, one deep whisper, intimating that some great and universally interesting event had occurred; all eyes, all thoughts, were occupied with the young and beautiful female, whose gorgeous apparel and splendid jewels threw

an air of insignificance upon all the fair visitants of the theatre; the business of the stage was utterly neglected — all seemed to consider the contemplation of so much loveliness far more deserving attention.

Upon this occasion an unmistakable sign from Madame Danglars intimated her desire to see Albert in her box directly the curtain fell on the second act, and neither the politeness nor good taste of Morcerf would permit his neglecting an invitation so unequivocally given. At the close of the act he therefore proceeded to the baroness's *loge*. Having bowed to the two ladies, he extended his hand to Debray. By the baroness he was most graciously welcomed, while Eugenie received him with her accustomed coldness.

"My dear fellow!" said Debray, "you have just come in the very nick of time to help a fellow-creature regularly beaten and at a standstill. There is madame overwhelming me with questions respecting the count; she insists upon it that I can tell her his birth, education, and parentage, where he came from, and whither he was going. Being no disciple of Cagliostro, I was wholly unable to do this; by way of getting out of the scrape, I said, 'Ask Morcerf, he has got the whole history of his beloved Monte-Cristo at his fingers' ends;' whereupon the baroness made you a sign to come hither, and now I leave the solution of her questions in your hands."

"Is it not almost incredible," said Madame Danglars, "that a person having at least half a million of secret service money at his command should possess so little information upon so every-day a matter as the present?"

"Let me assure you, madame," said Lucien, "that had I really that sum you mention at my disposal, I would employ it more profitably than in troubling myself to obtain particulars respecting the Count of Monte-Cristo, whose only merit in my eyes consists in his being twice as rich as a nabob. However, I have turned the business over to Morcerf, so pray settle it with him as may be most

agreeable to you; for my part, I care nothing about the count or his mysterious doings."

"I am very sure no nabob of our time would have sent me a pair of horses worth 32,000 francs, wearing on their heads four diamonds valued at 5,000 francs each."

"He seems to have a mania for diamonds," said Morcerf, smiling; "and I verily believe that, like Potemkin, he keeps his pockets filled for the sake of strewing them along the road, as little Thumb did his flint-stones."

"Perhaps he has discovered some mine," said Madame Danglars. "I suppose you know he has an order for unlimited credit on the baron's banking establishment?"

"I was not aware of it," replied Albert, "but I can readily believe it."

"And, further, that he stated to M. Danglars his intention of only staying a year in Paris, during which time he proposed to spend six millions. He must be the Shah of Persia travelling *incog*."

"Have you remarked the extreme beauty of that young female by whom he is accompanied, M. Lucien?" inquired Eugenie.

"I really never met with one woman so ready to do justice to the charms of another as yourself; let us see how far she merits your praises," continued Lucien, raising his lorgnette to his eye. "A most lovely creature, upon my soul!" cried he, after a long and searching scrutiny.

"Who is this young person, M. Morcerf?" inquired Eugenie; "does anybody know?"

"Allow me to state," said Albert, replying to this direct appeal, "that I can give you very tolerable information on that subject, as well as on most points relative to the singular person of whom we are now conversing — the young female is a Greek."

"So I should presume by her dress; if, therefore, you know no more than that one self-evident fact, the whole of the spectators in the theatre are as well informed as yourself."

"I am extremely sorry you find me so ignorant a cicerone," replied Morcerf, "but I'm reluctantly obliged to confess I have nothing further to communicate—yes, stay, I do know one thing more, namely, that she is a musician, for one day that I chanced to be breakfasting with the count, I heard the sound of a guzla—it is impossible it could have been touched by any finger but her own."

"Then your count entertains visitors, does he?" asked Madame Danglars.

"Indeed he does, and in a most noble manner, I can assure you."

"I must try and persuade M. Danglars to invite him to a ball or dinner, or something of the sort, that he may be compelled to ask us in return."

"What!" said Debray, laughing; "do you really mean you would go to his house?"

"Why not? my husband could accompany me."

"But do you know that this mysterious count is a bachelor?"

"You may have ample proof to the contrary if you look opposite," said the baroness, as she laughingly pointed to the beautiful Greek.

"No, no!" exclaimed Debray; "that female is not his wife—he told us himself she was his slave; do you recollect, Morcerf, his telling us so at your breakfast?"

"Well, then," said the baroness, "if slave she be, she has all the air and manner of a princess."

"Of the Arabian Nights?"

"If you like; but tell me, my good Lucien, what is it that constitutes a princess? gold, silver, and jewels; and our Greek beauty there is one blaze of diamonds; I doubt if any queen's could equal them."

"To me she seems overloaded," observed Eugenie; "she would look far better if she wore fewer, and we should then be able to see her finely formed throat and wrists."

"See, how the artist peeps out!" exclaimed Madame

Danglars; "my poor Eugenie, you must conceal your passion for the fine arts."

"I admire all that is beautiful in art or nature," returned the young lady.

"What do you think of the count?" inquired Debray; "he is not much amiss, according to my ideas of good looks."

"The count?" repeated Eugenie, as though it had not occurred to her to observe him sooner, "the count, — oh! he is so dreadfully pale."

"I quite agree with you," said Morcerf, "and it is in that very paleness that consists the secret we want to find out. The Countess G—— insists upon it he is a vampire."

"Then the Countess G—— has returned to Paris, has she?" inquired the baroness.

"Is that she, mamma?" asked Eugenie — "almost opposite to us, with that profusion of beautiful light hair?"

"Yes, yes, there she is!" cried Madame Danglars; "shall I tell you what you ought to do, Morcerf?"

"Command me, madame, I am all attention."

"Well, then, you should go and bring your Count of Monte-Cristo to us."

"What for?" asked Eugenie.

"What for? why, to converse with him, of course; if you have no curiosity to hear whether he expresses himself like other people, I can assure you I have. Have you really no desire to be introduced to this singular being?"

"None whatever," replied Eugenie.

"Strange girl!" murmured the baroness.

"He will very probably come of his own accord," said Morcerf. "There! do you see, madame, he recognizes you and bows."

The baroness returned the salute in the most smiling and graceful manner.

"Well," said Morcerf, "I may as well be magnanimous and tear myself away to forward your wishes. Adieu! I

will go and try if there is any means of speaking to him."

"Go straight to his box; that will be the simplest plan."

"But I have never been presented."

"Presented to whom?"

"To the beautiful Greek."

"You say she is only a slave?"

"While you assert she is a queen, or at least a princess. No, no, I cannot venture to enter his box; but I hope that, when he observes me leave you, he will come and take my place."

"We shall see; it is just probable, therefore go at once."

"Adieu! I sacrifice myself, remember that," said Albert, as he made his parting bow.

As he had predicted, just as he was passing the count's box, the door opened, and Monte-Cristo came forth. After giving some directions to Ali, who stood in the lobby, the count observed Albert, and, taking his arm, walked onward with him. Carefully closing the box-door, Ali placed himself before it, while a crowd of wondering spectators assembled around the unconscious Nubian.

"Upon my word," said Monte-Cristo, "Paris is a strange city, and the Parisians a very singular people; do pray observe that cluster of persons collected around poor Ali, who is as much astonished as themselves; really one might suppose he was the only Nubian they had ever beheld; now I will pledge myself, that a Frenchman might show himself in public, either in Tunis, Constantinople, Bagdad, or Cairo, without drawing a circle of gazers around him."

"That shows that the Eastern nations have too much good sense to waste their time and attention on objects undeserving of either. However, as far as Ali is concerned, I can assure you the interest he excites is merely from the circumstance of his being your attendant: you who are at this moment the most celebrated and fashionable person in Paris."

"Really? and what has procured for me so flattering a distinction?"

"What? why, yourself, to be sure! You give away horses worth a thousand guineas; you save the lives of ladies of high rank and beauty; you send thoroughbred racers to contest the prize of the Jockey Club, the horses being ridden by tiny urchins not larger than marmots; then, when you have carried off the golden trophy of victory, instead of setting any value on it, you give it to the first handsome woman you think of."

"And who has filled your head with all this nonsense?"

"Why, in the first place, I heard it from Madame Danglars, who, by the bye, is dying to see you in her box, or have you seen there by others; secondly, I learned it from Beauchamp's journal; and thirdly, from my own imagination. Why, if you sought concealment, did you call your horse Vampa?"

"That was an oversight, certainly," replied the count; "but tell me, does the Count de Morcerf never visit the opera? I have been looking for him, but without success."

"He will be here to-night."

"In what part of the house?"

"In the baroness's *loge*, I believe."

"Is the charming young female with her her daughter?"

"Yes."

"Indeed! then I congratulate you."

Morcerf smiled. "We will discuss that subject at length some future time," said he. "But what think you of the music?"

"What music?"

"That which you have just heard."

"Oh, it is admirable as the production of a human composer, sung by a party of bipeds without feathers, as Diogenes styled mankind."

"Why, my dear count, would you have me understand

that you undervalue our terrestrial harmony, because you can at pleasure enjoy the seraphic strains that proceed from the seven choirs of paradise?"

"You are right, in some degree; but when I wish to listen to sounds so exquisitely attuned to melody as mortal ear never yet listened to, I go to sleep."

"Then why not indulge yourself at once? Sleep, by all means, if such be your means of procuring the concord of celestial sounds. Pray, do not hesitate; you will find every incentive to slumber, and for what else but to send people asleep was the opera invented?"

"No, thank you. Your orchestra is rather too noisy to admit the soft wooing of the drowsy god — the sleep after the manner I have mentioned — and to produce the desired effects, absolute calm and silence are necessary: a certain preparation must also be called in aid."

"I know — the famous hashish!"

"Precisely. Now you know my secret; let me recommend you, my dear viscount, to come and sup with me whenever you wish to be regaled with music really worth listening to."

"I have already enjoyed that treat when breakfasting with you," said Morcerf.

"Do you mean at Rome?"

"I do."

"Ah, then, I suppose you heard Haydee's guzla; the poor exile frequently beguiles a weary hour in playing over to me the airs of her native land."

Morcerf did not pursue the subject, and Monte-Cristo himself fell into a silent reverie.

The bell rang at this moment for the rising of the curtain.

"You will excuse my leaving you," said the count, turning in the direction of his *loge*.

"What! Are you going?"

"Pray, say everything that is kind to Countess G—— on the part of her friend the Vampire."

"And what message shall I convey to the baroness?"

"That, with her permission, I propose doing myself the honor of paying my respects in the course of the evening."

The third act had now commenced; and during its progress the Count de Morcerf, according to promise, made his appearance in the box of Madame Danglars.

The Count de Morcerf was not one of those persons whose aspect would create either interest or curiosity in a place of public amusement; his presence, therefore, was wholly unnoticed, save by the occupants of the box in which he had just seated himself.

The quick eye of Monte-Cristo, however, marked his coming, and a slight though meaning smile passed over his lips as he did so.

Haydee's whole soul seemed centred in the business of the stage; like all unsophisticated natures, she delighted in whatever addressed itself to the eye or ear.

The third act passed off as usual. Mesdemoiselles Noblet, Julie, and Leroux executed the customary quantity of pirouettes; Robert duly challenged the Prince of Grenada; and the royal parent of the Princess Isabella, taking his daughter by the hand, swept around the stage with majestic strides, the better to display the rich folds of his velvet robe and mantle. After which the curtain again fell, and the spectators poured forth from the theatre into the lobbies and salon. The count also, quitting his, proceeded at once to the box of Madame Danglars, who could scarcely restrain a cry of mingled pleasure and surprise.

"Welcome, M. le comte!" exclaimed she, as he entered. "I have been most anxious to see you, that I might repeat verbally those thanks writing can so ill express."

"Surely so trifling a circumstance cannot deserve a place in your remembrance. Believe me, madame, I had entirely forgotten it."

"But it is not so easy to forget, M. le comte, that the

very day following the one in which you kindly prevented my disappointment regarding the horses, you saved the life of my dear friend, Madame de Villefort, which I had placed in danger by the very animals your generosity had restored to me."

"This time, at least, I cannot accept of your flattering acknowledgments. In the latter affair you owe me nothing. Ali, my Nubian slave, was the fortunate individual who enjoyed the privilege of rendering to your friend the trifling assistance you allude to."

"Was it Ali," asked the Count de Morcerf, "who rescued my son from the hands of bandits?"

"No, M. le comte," replied Monte-Cristo, pressing with friendly warmth the hand held out to him by the general; "in this instance I may fairly and freely accept your thanks; but you have already tendered them and fully discharged your debt — if, indeed, there existed one — and I feel almost mortified to find you still revert to the trifling aid that I was able to render your son."

"May I beg of you, madame la baronne, to honor me with an introduction to your charming daughter?"

"Oh! you are no stranger — at least not by name," replied Madame Danglars, "and the last two or three days we have really talked of nothing else but yourself. Eugenie," continued the baroness, turning towards her daughter, "M. the Count of Monte-Cristo."

The count bowed, while Mademoiselle Danglars returned a slight inclination of the head.

"You have a charming young person with you to-night, M. le comte," said Eugenie. "Your daughter, I presume?"

"No, indeed," said Monte-Cristo, astonished at the coolness and freedom of the question. "The female you allude to is a poor unfortunate Greek left under my care."

"And what is her name?"

"Haydee," replied Monte-Cristo.

"A Greek?" murmured the Count de Morcerf.

"Yes, indeed, count," said Madame Danglars; "and tell me, did you ever see at the court of Ali Tebelin, whom you so gloriously and valiantly served, a more exquisite beauty or richer costume than is displayed in the fair Greek before us?"

"Did I hear rightly, M. le comte," said Monte-Cristo, "that you served at Yanina?"

"I was inspector-general of the pasha's troops," replied Morcerf; "and I seek not to conceal that I owe my fortune, such as it is, to the liberality of the illustrious Albanese chief."

"But look! pray look!" exclaimed Madame Danglars.

"Where?" stammered out Morcerf.

"There! there!" said Monte-Cristo, as, wrapping his arms around the count, he leaned with him over the front of the box, just as Haydee, whose eyes were occupied in examining the theatre in search for the count, perceived his pale, marble features close to the countenance of Morcerf, whom he was holding in his arms.

This sight produced on the astonished girl an effect similar to that of the fabulous head of Medusa. She bent forward as though to assure herself of the reality of what she beheld — then, uttering a faint cry, threw herself back in her seat. The sound that burst from the agitated Greek quickly reached the ear of the watchful Ali, who instantly opened the box-door to ascertain the cause.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Eugenie, "what has happened to your ward, M. le comte? she seems taken suddenly ill!"

"Very probably," answered the count. "But do not be alarmed on her account! Haydee's nervous system is delicately organized, and she is peculiarly susceptible of the odors even of flowers — nay, there are some which cause her to faint if brought into her presence. However," continued Monte-Cristo, drawing a small vial from his pocket, "I have an infallible remedy for such attacks."

So saying, he bowed to the baroness and her daughter,

exchanged a parting shake of the hand with Debray and the count, and quitted the box.

Upon his return to Haydee, he found her extremely pale and agitated. Directly she saw him she seized his hand, while the icy coldness of her own made Monte-Cristo start.

"With whom was my lord conversing a few minutes since?" asked she, in a trembling voice.

"With Count de Morcerf," answered Monte-Cristo. "He tells me he served your illustrious father, and that he owes his fortune to him."

"Base, cowardly traitor that he is!" exclaimed Haydee, her eyes flashing with rage. "He it was who sold my beloved parent to the Turks, and the fortune he boasts of was the price of his treachery. Knowest thou not that, my dear lord?"

"Something of this I heard in Epirus," said Monte-Cristo; "but the particulars are still unknown to me. You shall relate them to me, my child. They are no doubt both curious and interesting."

"Yes, yes; but let us be gone hence, I beseech you. I feel as though it would kill me to remain longer near that dreadful man."

So saying, Haydee rose, and wrapping herself in her burnoose of white cashmere, embroidered with pearls and coral, she hastily quitted the box at the moment when the curtain was rising upon the fourth act.

"Do you observe," said the Countess G—— to Albert, who had returned to her side, "that man does nothing like other people: he listens most devoutly to the third act of 'Robert le Diable,' and when the fourth begins, makes a precipitate retreat."

